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Summer Issue 1998

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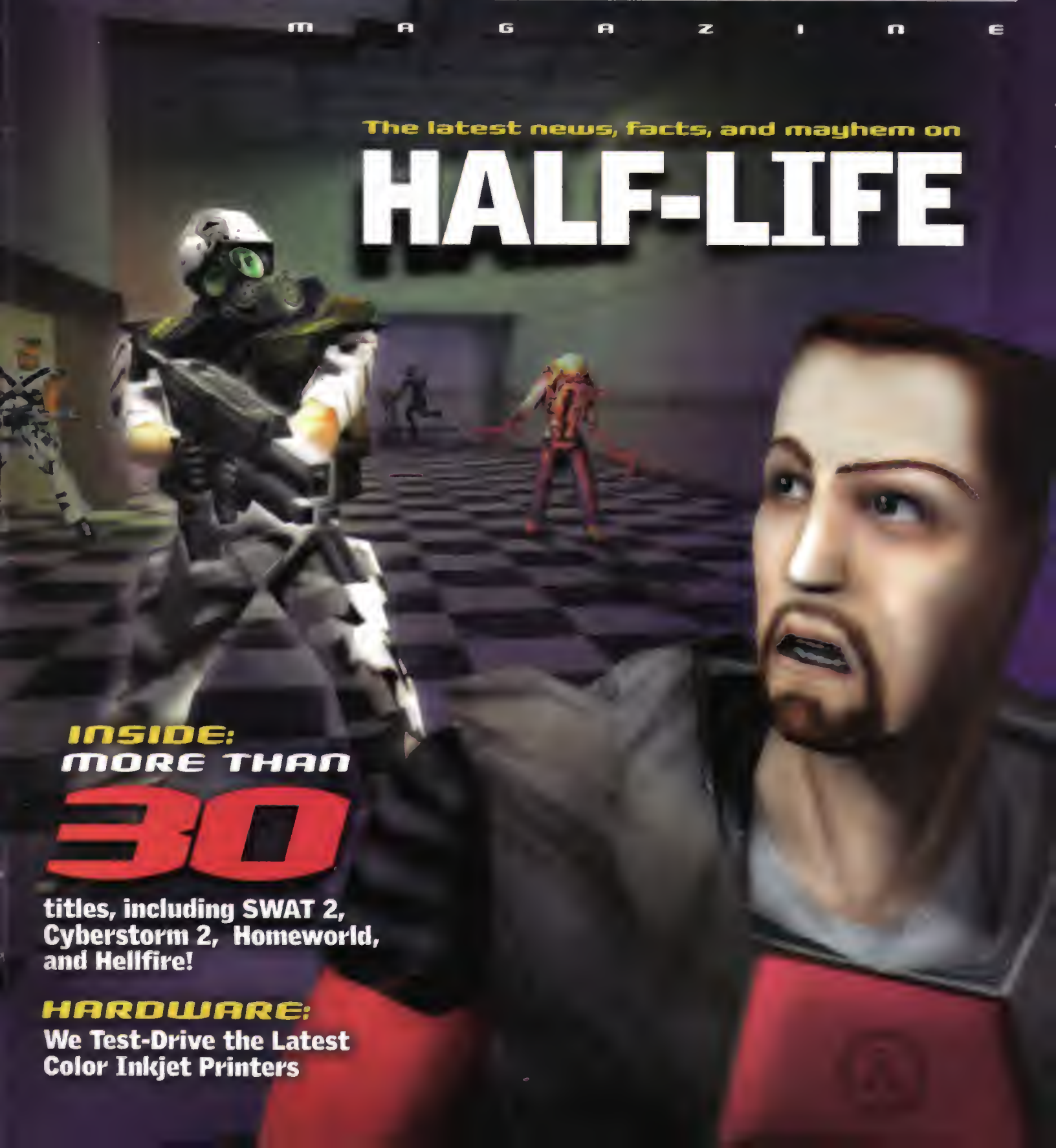
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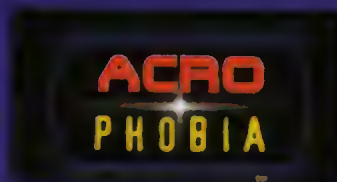
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The State of Online Gaming:

YOU'VE NEVER HAD IT SO GOOD!

It's staggering how, in its relatively short existence, the concept of playing PC games against other people via the Internet has generated so much commotion. It's also staggering how simple the concept is and how difficult it is to implement.

D SOFTWARE'S *DOOM* got the buzz started, or at least alerted a larger audience than before that games could be played against other people. As soon as the fragile human (particularly male) ego got involved ("I'm better

than you, nah, nah"), it was bound to snowball.

But despite the dollar-sign-dominated goals of the online-gaming pioneers, if ever there were a time to be an online gamer, either testing the waters or indulging in long-term commitments, now is it.

Both Total Entertainment Network (TEN) and Mplayer began life with a paid-subscription model. They both have their advantages—easy

community building, constant opponents, organized tournaments, etc. But such is the beauty of the Internet that the core component of these services—putting people in touch to play games—was available elsewhere, for free. The subscription model was canned, and now both services are free—funded instead by venture

capitalists looking to build an advertising base.

In just a couple of short years since the online-gaming buzz began, the market has expanded hugely. (Think about it: Were you playing online games, or even looking into it, 18 months ago? Probably not. And now? If you aren't, then you're missing out.) Some software publishers have taken the initiative with their own game servers—Blizzard scored huge points for enabling smash-hit action RPG *Diablo* to be played for free over battle.net. Likewise, Activision and Bungie both ensured continued play of their games with servers for *Interstate 76* and *Myth: The Fallen Lords*. Kudos all around for providing a genuine "added bonus" service to customers—now there's a novelty.

Evolution online

Online gaming has evolved in many different ways as all the companies, aiming to satisfy the demands of their be-sulted paymasters, look for alternatives to the one-stop service. So now there are the "persistent universe" games (*Meridian 59*, *The Realm*, *Ultima Online*, and the forthcoming *EverQuest* from Sony and *Asheron's Call* from Microsoft), where the world continues while you're away and you live, eat, sleep, and breathe as a character in a living, evolving, online world. You pay for the experience, but to actually live


In a world (assuming it all works right) is a compelling package for 10 bucks a month.

Enter the dragon

The initial sprint to the finish line of securing this market has become a marathon. That means that the investors who bolted from the blocks on the "B" of the starting gun's "Bang" are likely to be out of steam after one lap. Then who's left? Microsoft.

Yep, the big pappy of the computer industry has IGZ—the Internet Gaming Zone. A sound business model (free play for some games and others that you pay for on a daily basis), marketed in the familiar slick style, and part of the happy family of products that are on 90 percent of PCs on the market. It's a compelling package that other game publishers are buying (Lucas Arts' exclusive deal for their sought-after titles being the first ominous sign of things to come). And Microsoft has the near-bottomless purse with which to fund this commitment to gaming.

The gamers are winning

In the quest for dollars, only one group is winning right now—and that's the games player. Gamers have not bought the "pay-to-play" model and now the services are free. The TENs and Mplayers are waiting for the ad dollars to build to ensure success. Sadly, they may not be able to last until that's a reality, but right now they, and Kali, Dwango, HEAT, etc., are desperate for players. So since they're being so accommodating, now's the time to throw your hat into the ring and try them all. With games to play, people to meet (and frag to bits), why not? 

Rob Smith is the Executive Editor of PC Games.

"...Were you playing online games, even looking into it, 18 months ago? Probably not. And now? If you aren't, then you're missing out."

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I'VE ONLY BEEN ON THE JOB FOR ONE issue as the editor of *InterAction*, and you readers have already let me down. Where are your letters? The rants and raves, the love letters and advice? I want to hear from you—that's what INBOX is all about. Our addresses, for email and for old-fashioned mail, appear on this page. Don't be shy, I'm paid not to laugh at you!

Naturally, I believe we have a particularly fine issue this time around, beginning with Chris Hudak's coverage of *Half-Life* on page 18. You'll then follow Bill Trotter through a day in the life of a rookie in *SWAT 2* (page 26). Mark Walker puts his military-fiction-writing skills to good use in his *Red Baron* story (page 42). Paul Quinn tours us through the *YOU DON'T KNOW JACK* universe on page 54, then follows up with a tour of the various *Trophy Bass* titles. From pop-culture trivia to fresh-water fishing—Paul does it all.

You'll find the usual features in this issue—News Notes, Hintline, and our hardware review (this time out, the subject is color printers)—plus some new wrinkles. There should be enough here to keep you off the streets and out of trouble.

Again, welcome. And remember: your assignment is to write back. I'm listening.

—Steven Bryan Bieler

Questions? Concerns? Kudos?

Write!

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Today, I sighted an a TV episode of *Duck Tails* the sound of King's Quest VII's giant scorpion roar....I am writing this for the *Sierra Sightings* contest....

Jim Swaney
via Email

Hella Jim,
You have terrific hearing. I also think you need to find a hobby. But please see my answer to Chad's letter below about *Sierra Sightings*.

Recently, while watching an episode of *Frasier*, I saw the star of *Gabriel Knight 2: The Beast Within*, Dean Erickson, making a guest appearance as a waiter named Eric. This particular episode may have been a rerun, but I thought to report it anyway.

Chad Parker
via Email

Chad and everyone,
There has been considerable confusion about what exactly constitutes a *Sierra Sighting* (and wins you a free game). The #1 rule: It must be something we can reproduce in the pages of *InterAction*! Last issue's sighting, a *Faxtrot* comic strip containing a parody of *YOU DON'T KNOW JACK*, is the perfect example of what we want, as it was entertaining and reproducible.

To lessen the confusion, here's a short list of things we won't accept as sightings:

1. Actors from the live-action *The Beast Within* and *Phantasmagoria*. Some of these folks turn up everywhere on TV, making them too easy to spot: Dean Erickson (*Gabriel Knight*), Wolf Muser (*Dr. Klingmann*), and Robert Milano (*Zoltan Carna In Phantas*) in particular.

2. Words and phrases we didn't invent: "phantasmagoria," "You don't know Jack," "Rager Wilco," and "Here Today, Gone Tomorrow" were part of the English language long before *Sierra* came along.

3. Reviews of our games and ads showing our boxes don't count.

Good hunting!

Does *Half-Life* have a storyline which unfolds itself by talking to characters? Or was that just a bunch of crap?

Weasel
via Email

Weasel you sweet-talker, "A bunch of crap"—what? We're offended. OK, we're not. Yes there's a plot to *Half-Life*! Characters will talk to you and give you hints, but none of them will stop your game and bombard you with a lengthy explanation of what's going on. Go to our *Half-Life* story on page 18 to learn more.

I have just recently played through two awesome *Sierra* games: *Rama* and *Lighthouse*. The games were so cool that when I finished with them, I couldn't help but want more. I was wondering if there are any sequels planned for either of these games.

Mike King
via Email

Hey Mike,
Thanks for the kind words. *Rama* and *Lighthouse* were indeed great games—two of the best games of 1996! I hope you'll check out some of the games in this issue and drive something newer off the lot. As for sequels, there are none in the works that I'm aware of. If that changes, you'll read about it here.

I have heard that the *Space Quest VII* project has been canceled. What's happening?

Janes
via Email

Janesy,
Unfortunately, the overwhelming impression here is that there just aren't enough people interested in following the series. Which doesn't mean that *Space Quest* has played itself out. Right now the SQ development team is working on the upcoming *Babylon 5* space sim. Perhaps someday they'll return for another adventure with *Rager Wilco*....

I've always enjoyed playing with *Sierra* products. I think they're great! One thing, though, I cannot help but notice that a good share of the games being released by you nowadays are sequels or remakes of previously released games. Who should be contacted if anyone should come up with an idea about a game that they would like to see?

Francisca Zamudio
via Email

Hola Francisca,
Francisca Zamudio, meet Mike King and Mr. Jones. Some people love sequels, some people aren't that crazy about them. But you've asked a good question, one we hear often: If you have an idea for a game, should you submit it to a game company? Speaking just for *Sierra*, I can say that we can't accept outside ideas—it's too much of a hassle legally. We rely instead on our talented teams of in-house game designers to get the job done. Good luck, whatever you do. Just don't sue us. ☺

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So, you like movies? Well, we certainly like movies. And, from July 1 through August 31, we're going to send you to the movies! All you have to do is purchase one of our Sierra Attractions titles, mail in the redemption coupon, and you'll receive two free movie passes. The passes are good for any movie playing at any theatre in the country. Sierra Attractions titles include: *Hoyle Classic Board Games*, *Hoyle Classic Card Games*, *Hoyle Casino*, *Power Chess '98*, *YOU DON'T KNOW JACK TV*, *YDKJ Movies*, *YDKJ Huge*, *YDKJ Volume 3*, *After Dark 4.0*, *After Dark Deluxe*, *3-D Ultra MiniGolf Deluxe*, and *3-D Ultra Pinball: The Lost Continent*. Hurry down to your favorite software retailer, because this offer won't be around forever. Keep reading for more chances to see great movies.



JACK HITS THE BIG SCREEN

Think you know Jack about movies, do you? You're in luck—'cause we're giving you a chance to prove it with our *YOU DON'T KNOW JACK* about Gramercy Pictures contest! This contest is packed full of great prizes, including a chance to win VIP movie passes for a year. Acclaimed for its recent hits—*Fargo*, *Bean*, and *The Big Lebowski*—Gramercy Pictures has a hot new summer lineup and you can get in on the action. Just point your web browser to the JACK ASSociation website at www.berksys.com/jackass/index.html, and enter the sweepstakes to win a private showing for you and 50 of your friends or two VIP Advanced Screening Passes to all Gramercy Pictures films for a year, as well as other cool prizes. Make sure you enter soon, because this contest is as fleeting as those hot summer days.



SIERRA'S NEW BUNDLES OF JOY

Please help us in welcoming our newest bundles: *The Great Civil War, Collector's Edition 3D Ultra Pinball, Lords of Magic Special Edition*, and *Gabriel Knight: Collector's Edition*. Proud parent Sierra created these bundled games so you acquire several titles at once.

The first-born of these collections, *The Great Civil War*, combines the classic favorite *The Blue and the Gray* and the bestseller *Robert E. Lee: Civil War General* with the recent hit *Civil War Generals 2: Grant, Lee, Sherman*. Complete with customized battlefields and exciting reenactment footage, *The Great Civil War* will keep you strategizing for hours!

Let us introduce our second addition to the family, *3D Ultra Pinball Collector's Edition*. This special edition pack includes the original *3D Ultra Pinball*, the ghoulish haunts of *Pinball 2: Creep Night*, and the prehistoric adventures of *Pinball 3: The Lost*

Continent. Plus, in your non-pinballing time, you can sit back and explore every era of pinball with famous pinball players in the video *The History of Pinball*. And on top of that, this bundle comes with *The Incredible Machine*, which provides 150 of the most challenging puzzle contraptions ever seen.

Next we have our *Lords of Magic Special Edition*. This

little devil contains the newest version of *Lords of Magic*, including several recently released updates, and the *Legends of Urak Quest Pack*. These battles are not for the faint of heart, so prepare yourself for exciting wars of right and might.

Finally, there's our fourth bundle of joy—*Gabriel Knight: The Collector's Edition*. A gigantic collection, this one includes the highly acclaimed *GK: Sins of the Fathers*, its exciting follow-up *GK: The Beast Within*, the graphic novels from *Sins of the Fathers*, and the graphic novel and movie for the upcoming release *GK: Blood of the Sacred, Blood of the Damned*.

The stork will be dropping this quartet of exciting hits throughout stores all summer, so check with your favorite retailer, and pick up one of our newest creations.



THE TOP FIVE

SIERRA GAMES—SPRING '97

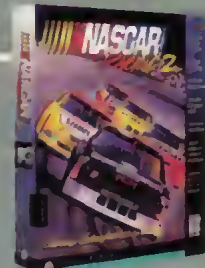
1

SIERRA PRO PILOT



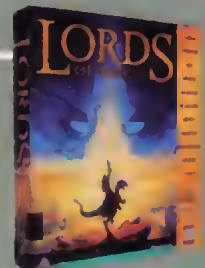
2

NASCAR RACING 2



3

LORDS OF MAGIC



4

YOU DON'T KNOW JACK HUGE



5

RED BARON II





GO BEZERK

No, it's not the Internet address for the Post Office, it's the award-winning, super-cool www.beZerk.com website, and it's a great way to test your trivia bone anytime you're online. When can you play? Twenty-four hours, seven days a week. The cost? Free!

Start off with the outrageous *YOU DON'T KNOW JACK* series, and match brain cells with other players around the world in pop-culture subjects like Sports, TV, Movies, and more. This isn't a boring spin the wheel game, you'll need to stay on your toes and keep your typing fingers loose as you find out whether you really know it all, or whether you know Jack!

If you're more the creative type, *Acrophobia* is definitely something you shouldn't be afraid of. Take a series of letters and turn it into an acronym—the quicker and more original, the better. Who decides the best one? Your fellow players, of course! You can go for the speed bonus, or really think it through to come up with an acronym that would make a bureaucracy proud.

Both of these online games are great for everything from parties to work "breaks." While a crowd of people around a computer yelling random words might turn heads somewhere else, it's par for the course around the Sierra offices. But be careful—HCTB! (Here comes the boss!)

UPDATE YOUR GAMES

As computer games continue to push the envelope with the latest technology, patches are becoming a great way to upgrade, support, and, well, patch a game after it has been released. Some patches introduce a new feature to a game, while others correct those minor bugs that slipped by our beta testers.

Patches are always free and can be downloaded from our website at www.sierra.com/support/technical/patches.html. New patches are also announced on the appropriate message boards (www.sierra.com/messages/), so you'll get the word the moment they're available.

Some of the most recent patches are for *Sierra Pro Pilot*, *Lords of Magic*, *Sierra Sports: Ski Racing*, *Red Baron II* (a Superpatch), *Hoyle Poker*, and *Driver's Education*. If you have any of these games, you should check out these downloads guaranteed to improve gameplay. You can also check the product pages in www.sierra.com/products/ to see if your favorite game has a patch listed.



NEW SIERRA SPORTS LINEUP UNVEILED AT DAYTONA 500

By Mark Dultz

Set against one of the most spectacular runnings of the Daytona 500, the Sierra Sports division peeled back the curtains of their much-anticipated lineup for 1998. The February kickoff event for the newly formed Sierra Sports drew gaming journalists from as far away as Australia and Europe. And while the launch of Sierra's highly touted slate of sports titles proved climactic in and of itself, the lure of viewing the 40th running of the adrenaline-charged Daytona 500 up close helped to seal the deal. After nearly three hours of intense bumper-to-bumper driving—in which the lead changed hands 13 times between eight different drivers—the 300,000+ standing-room-only crowd got to witness veteran racecar driver Dale Earnhardt take the checkered flag, then cruise into victory lane. For the 47-year-old Earnhardt, his victory put to an end a personal 20-year bid to win the coveted Winston Cup crown.

Afterward, exhilarated members of the press were escorted to the Daytona USA museum, which is located adjacent to the Daytona International Speedway, where Earnhardt's Number 3 car will be retired, only to be given a hands-on demonstration of Sierra Sports' upcoming project—*Grand Prix Legends* from Papyrus. After a brief demonstration, journalists were then able to put on their racing gloves and test their driving skills against some of the most famous open-wheeled Grand Prix racers of the '60s, learning firsthand what it was like to negotiate several of the most challenging race courses ever designed.

Sierra Sports seized the moment to trot out some of the other titles currently in development. The media learned that Sierra Sports will continue to leverage several existing franchises—including critically acclaimed titles in its fishing series and highly popular team stadium sports lineup—while continuing to infuse every new introduction in each series with an array of cutting-edge enhancements.

At the junket, speculation on which titles were forthcoming from Sierra Sports was put to rest. All told, Sierra Sports indicated that it will be unleashing nine new titles for 1998, among them the highly anticipated *Grand Prix Legends*, *NASCAR Racing 3*, *NASCAR 50th Anniversary Edition*, *Ski Racing '99*, *Golf Pro 2.0*, *Ultimate Soccer Manager*, *Fantasy Sports Pro*, *Football Pro '99*, *Basketball Pro '99*, and *Baseball Pro '99*.



THE TOP FIVE

HOME PRODUCTIVITY—SPRING '97

1

PRINT
ARTIST



2

COMPLETE
HOME
SUITE



3

COMPLETE
LAND
DESIGNER
SUITE



4

GENERATIONS
DELUXE



5

USA '98:
STREETS &
DESTINATIONS



CONTROVERSY SURROUNDS CARTOGRAPHER

DATELINE: Monmouth, *The Realm*: The most detailed map ever made of this online land has just been published, and traders are already carrying it to every town, no matter how perilous the journey. The map (shown here) was plotted, drawn, and colored by *The Realm*'s leading cartographer, Ricky Paulo, and some controversy already accompanies it. Rumors are afloat as to the map's accuracy. Did Paulo deliberately include falsehoods? Was he trying to misdirect wizards or warriors who seek him to no good end? Or was he just trying to be funny?

Further investigation has revealed that Ricky Paulo has a counterpart identity on the barbarous world called Earth: Richard Powell, an artist and wit in the employ of Sierra. Powell has worked on such diverse projects as *Space Quest*, *Lighthouse*, *Collier's* (as art director), *Gobriel Knight 2*, and *Outpost 2*.

The only way to check the accuracy of Paulo's/Powell's map is to tramp the roads of *The Realm* yourself. Forty new immigrants pass through the portal between the Earth and *The Realm* every day. There are already more than 15,000 permanent residents! To investigate this multiplayer, online-only game, journey to www.sierra.com/realm, and download the free demo.



PRINT ARTIST TAKES YOU TO THE LOUVRE

Lately, everyone has been talking about digital pictures—how good they look, how fast they are to work with, and how easy they are to store. Well, Sierra Home has teamed up with Kodak to help bring digital photos to your computer screen. This September, you can get your own free copy of *Print Artist Classic* when you purchase Kodak's "Pictures on Disk" from any of the 40,000 authorized Kodak "Picture Disk" development stations—which features your photos digitally developed and placed on a CD-ROM or floppy disk.

Since *Print Artist* is designed to help you quickly and easily use, edit, and manipulate digital photos in all of your printed projects (cards, invitations, party sets, banners, posters, etc.), it seemed like a good idea to give you the chance to show us what you can do. This fall (September through December 1998), Sierra Home will be running a "Digital Photo" contest. To enter, submit your best digital photo within a *Print Artist* project. You'll qualify to win a number of great prizes, including digital cameras and scanners. The Grand Prize is an all-expense-paid trip for two to Paris and the Louvre. Imagine standing before the priceless treasures of the world's most famous art museum.

Watch for additional details in the upcoming Fall and Holiday Issues of *InterAction Magozine*.





CART CONTINUES THROUGH 2003

Papyrus, the motorsports division of Sierra Sports, recently extended its licensing agreement with CART (Championship Auto Racing Teams Licensed Products). Having secured the right to use the CART name and logos through the year 2003, Papyrus will develop a new CART racing sim (so far unnamed), which is scheduled for release in 1999. This upcoming product will continue along the same award-winning lines as Papyrus' 1995 release, *CART Racing*. Papyrus will include its new revolutionary game engine in the 1999 CART release, which will first be featured in their summer '98 *Grand Prix Legends* title.

The Fed Ex Championship Series (sanctioned by Championship Auto Racing Teams, Inc.) is a 19-race series that features open-wheel, 850-horsepower champ cars that are capable of speeds in excess of 200mph. Drivers such as Al Unser Jr., Bobby Rahal, Jimmy Vasser, and Christian Fittipaldi race on ovals, road courses, and temporary street courses in the United States, Canada, Brazil, Japan, and Australia.

FAR OUT SWEEPSTAKES RESULTS

To celebrate the release of *Outpost 2: Divided Destiny*, we decided to throw a huge contest—the *Outpost 2* Far Out Sweepstakes. All you had to do was check out the *Outpost 2* website and fill out the online form or send in a postcard. And that is exactly what more than 49,000 of you did. What a great response! Three winners, Gerald R. Turner of North Charleston, SC, Judy McCurdy from Broken Arrow, OK, and Patricia Varney of Fort Edward, NY, each won an Advanced Meade Telescope. The Meade Model 395 is a 90mm refracting

telescope with a deluxe equatorial mount and an aluminum tripod (est. value \$600). The Grand

Prize winner of the Far Out Sweepstakes is (drum roll please)

Anna Boyd of Rescue, CA. Anna

won the Ultimate PC—an Intel Pentium 200mhz MMX with 32mb RAM, a 2.5gb hard drive, and a 24X CD-ROM (est. value \$3,500). Twenty-five other lucky people won a team-autographed copy of *Outpost 2*. Congratulations to all our winners!



WE'RE EVEN GIVING IT AWAY

Everybody loves a winner, so here are the spring's top 10 downloads from www.sierra.com, and once again, our classic Johnny Castaway screensaver continues its lock on the number-one spot, while *Sierra Sports: Ski Racing* gets a lift up to number seven.

You can find all these downloads and lots of other goodies at www.sierra.com/free. It's frequently updated, so check back often, and see what we're giving away next!

1. *Johnny Castaway Screensaver*
2. *Diving Adventure Screensaver*
3. *Red Baron 1*
4. *Betrayal at Krondor*
5. *NASCAR Racing 2*
6. *3-D Ultra MiniGolf*
7. *Sierra Sports Ski Racing*
8. *3-D Ultra Pinball 2: Creep Night*
9. *Hellfire update*
10. *3-D Ultra Pinball*



DID WE MENTION IT'S FREE?

by Jeff Gilbert

It's been said that the best things in life are free. While this leaves just non-legal advice, public access television, and recycled air in that shrinking category, the list now happily includes the World Opponent Network (WON), an exciting new online game-matching service that's FREE to join, FREE of membership dues, and FREE to play. Is there a catch? Yep—you gotta have fun!

It's kind of like the Dating Game for computer gamers. WON matches players with similar tastes and skill levels, pitting people against people instead of Pentium processors. (It should be noted that the human adversary is far more devious than any machine.) Where this becomes the essence of the World Opponent Network is in the live tournaments. In a recent monthlong *Civil War Generals 2* (CWG2) Tournament, hundreds of players representing the North and the South signed up and crossed swords in an epic battle for Old Glory. In the end it was Duane S. Russell from Lancaster, TX, leading

the South to a decisive victory over John C.

Busterna from Woodbury, MN, and his hard-fighting Northern troops. The WON Event Calendar is loaded with weekly online multiplayer events just like CWG2, from *Trophy Boss* fishing, *Friday Night Hoyle Poker*, and *Red Baron* dogfights, to *Sierra Sports Golf*, *Lords of the Reolm*, and *3-D Ultra MiniGolf*. Need a team partner or simply someone to play a game with? The WON Message Boards are a great way to meet new players and do battle. There are no enemies on the World Opponent Network—only friends you haven't beaten yet.

Live tournaments are only a part of the whole WON experience. For instance, your first stop on the World Opponent Network should be the Player's Lounge, the site's always-buzzing nerve center. Enter the Screenshot Caption Contest, catch up on all

the latest game news and reviews—or write your own. Read articles on gaming magazines, products, and interviews with game developers; enter contests; post messages; compare winning scores. Simply, if the Player's Lounge were an intersection, it'd be Times Square.

A resource that's a big hit with the gaming community is the WON Game Search Engine, an updated-weekly database containing information on nearly every computer and console game ever created. Locate reviews, patches, demos, hints, cheats, strategies, previews.... If it's a game, the WON Search Engine can find it.

With all its features and innovations, easily the best feature is the ease of use. WON is the user-friendliest game site on the Internet, designed to specifically accommodate everyone, from first-timers to old-timers. It's as simple as logging on, signing up, and playing. Did we mention that it's FREE?



The first tactical sim^{with} intense turn-based^{and} real-time combat.

It's the year 3569. In the Typhoeus system, a newly-discovered jumpgate will allow massive expansion and wealth to the corporation that controls the gate. Eight corporations will fight for this right...

**only one
will
succeed.**

Looking for depth? Cyberstorm 2 is the ultimate game of mass destruction and total control—for gamers who love deeply-layered strategic warfare.

Choose your corporation and mission.

Eight galactic powers, each with strategic advantages and disadvantages, fighting in richly-detailed missions or randomly-generated campaigns with infinite replayability.

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Awesome HERCs, Grav Vehicles, Tanks. 27 chassis with over 300 devices and weapons.



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YOUR WORLD BEGINS

TAKE A
JOURNEY
INTO A
WORLD OF
BULLSQUIDS,
HOUNDEYES,
AND ALIEN
SLAVES.

WITH ^A BANG



By Chris Huels

M

EDIA CONVERGENCE

the slow but steady drawing-together of film, music, text, interactive environment and (most importantly) the mindsets of many entertainment forms—is no longer the racy concept it was even

10 years ago...and for Valve Software, it's the order of the day. *Half-Life*, Valve's maiden voyage into the first-person action genre, throws the player into a gorgeous, detailed, and consuming world that literally starts off with a bang.



"Half-Life is the most beautiful and convincing-looking first-person game I've seen to date, and I see a lot of games."



TAKE THIS JOB AND SHOVE IT: OK, this wasn't your best day at the office. Now you just want to go home—but to do that, you'll have to outwit, outmaneuver, and outfight aliens, zombies, and government employees with very large guns.

A huge, disastrous, space-tearing bang.

First of all some background for those of you who haven't heard some variation of the game's set-up at least 30,000 times already in various salivating gaming publications: *Half-Life* is a plot-heavy, intelligent, extremely immersive, and eye-gogglingly beautiful first-person action game that takes place in a decommissioned missile base where a top-secret experiment has gone horribly wrong, ripping open an interdimensional gateway and allowing hordes of we-don't-know-what-they-are Extraterrestrials With Attitude Problems to cross into our world.

Pretty standard stuff so far, right? Wrong. Tired of the current crop of slam-bang but intellectually and emotionally anemic first-person games, Valve Software has contrived to build a realistic and eerie-looking immersive experience (I can say without hyperbole

in this Year of Our Lord Nineteen Hundred and Ninety-Eight that *Half-Life* is the most beautiful and convincing-looking first-person game I've seen to date, and I see a lot of games) that fully exploits the best elements of motion pictures—a relevant story line, character interaction, plot twists, and an attention to detail that would make James Cameron proud.

The guys and gals at Valve want you to feel you're part of a living, dynamic environment and that your choices and reactions matter. Revealing too many specific plot points of a game this ambitious would be a great evil, but let me try to paint a picture, a first-person pastiche of what gamers can expect, a little slice of The World According to Valve:

One ordinary day, with aliens

It's kind of dull in the facility—workaday, scientific, sterile, a kind of safety-glass-and-reinforced-brushed-concrete kinda place—but the hours are good and I don't have to talk to any brass with bullets in their heads and medals up their wazoos; just suit up, run some tests on The Project, try not to step on the pencilnecks in their white lab coats, decontaminate, have a few Sapporos at the Officer's Club topside. I don't even have to know what The Project is, precisely. And that means I don't have a clue. Just call me "Cog" Freeman.

The lab is doing fine. The Project is going fine. Even the Coke machine that occasionally steals quarters is only doing it to this one geezer scientist, and it's kind of funny to watch, so that's fine, too. Everything's going just fine, right up to the explosion, which—succinctly, in a word, to paint with broad strokes, to give the essential gestalt of the event—sucks.

It's loud—Nagasaki-loud—and



KILL 'EM ALL, LET VALVE SORT 'EM OUT: The Marines have landed, and something's gonna die. That could mean you.



ASK MR. SCIENCE: The lab coats might know something that'll keep you alive. Ask first, shoot later.

when I come to, the facility does indeed look like it's been nuked: The once-shiny walls are scored, cracked, and smoking; the security doors are blown half off their tracks. Those monitoring stations, eight million a pop, are all half-ton doorstops now. If there's an upside here, it's the fact that that frigging Coke machine's quarter-stealing days are over. And that cycling emergency klaxon, the very last sound you ever want to hear while working on The Project, is braying the only word it knows in its harsh and alien voice, over and over and over: Evacuate!

Emergency red lighting has kicked in, making the corridors blood-red and the real blood—which is everywhere—black.

The phrase “all hell breaks loose” really fits the bill—can't see jack in this cruddy lighting—I hit the flashlight control in my suit, and it pushes back the dark a little. Before I know where I'm going, I'm out of the test area and sprinting down the feed corridor, smacking into toppled machine cabinets, stumbling over and around dead bodies, running right into a panicked lab geek who looks as terrified as I must look.

“I'll follow you!” he cries and, hardly listening to him, I push around him and keep running. He'll follow me? Great, we'll die together—he doesn't seem to grasp that I don't know where the hell I'm going, either.

Your funeral, Seymour, I think, and keep running. I suddenly realize I'm hurt. I must have passed five First Aid stations on my way to the test area, and I can't even remember where a single one is. I don't know the layout of the facility



BEASTIE BOYS: Your commute home's not going to get any easier if big uglies like these puppies take over.





"...the **split-second** glimpse I catch of the thing **behind the door** is enough to reach a conclusion: We are all in deep, deep **doodoo!**"



TROPHY BASS WAS NEVER LIKE THIS: If the aliens don't gulp you down, they might just take your carcass for a little ride.

that well, and it's only when I come across the corpse of a battle-sulted security guard that I realize I've been running the wrong way. The guard's lifeless hand is near his gun, as though he'd attempted to draw it.

"Back the other way," I mutter to myself, running full-out, the alarm filling the air everywhere.

Something wicked this way comes

Ahead in the corridor, a blasted lab door's been blown completely off its hinges and across the hall from its twisted frame; the door is now canted against the opposite wall. I have a quick, irrational flash of memory, of stacking couch cushions against the wall to make a fort, as a child—I must be terrified—and I'd sit inside, barricaded safely against the world, and—

I stop dead, my shoes squeaking on the concrete floor. Between the ruined door and the wall, something is moving.

I inch forward to bring the flashlight into use, and the split-second glimpse I catch of the thing behind the ruined door is enough to reach a conclusion: We are all in deep, deep doodo.

I run back to the guard and grab his pistol. Time to get serious. I should be looking for an elevator, an escape route to the surface, but some primal, lizard-part of my brain tells me that some things cannot be allowed to exist. I walk calmly back to the monstrosity trapped behind the door, shoot it dead, and keep shooting it until I've emptied a clip.

Strange interlude

What with everything that's happening, I forget that Lab Coat is still following me, and when I turn to see his pale, terrified mug a foot from mine, I nearly blow him away on reflex. Instead, I hit the

SKELETAL ANIMATION SYSTEM

Most first-person action games feature chunky, often indistinguishable characters with limited movements—characters that more closely resemble the Michelin Tire Man than something believable. That's because of the polygonal animation systems used in those games. Half-Life, however, uses a proprietary "skeletal animation system" that allows the designers to create beautiful, detailed characters with complex movements. Characters slink, slither, and leap with creepy realism.

So how's it done? In other games of this type, developers must move the entire bulk of a character's body, frame by frame, to render an animation of, say, a creature running. This consumes much of the computer's processing ability and results in the aforementioned problems. Half-Life's skeletal animation system allows animators to render only the characters' bones. The overlaying skin moves in sync with the underlying bone system.

In technical terms, the 500-or-so polygon size limit in other games' character animations is shattered by Half-Life's ability to smoothly animate 6,000+ polygon characters at 30 frames per second. You'll wonder how you ever got by before skeletal animation!

Action key and try to talk to him, see if he's got any helpful suggestions dribbling out of that receding-hairline. Blue-Book melon of his as to how we can get the heck out of this burning, blasted Chinese-fire-drill of a facility. He's babbling, flabbergasted. He can't believe what he's hearing: I'm not actually going to abandon the

facility, am I? Abandon my post, abandon my government, abandon The Project in its darkest hour? Perhaps Professor Nutball has a point.

You will be assimilated

Then, over his shoulder, in the dark, I can see one of Professor Nutball's former pocket-protector pals staggering around, his oh-so-dedicated-to-The-Project cranium firmly and terminally clamped within the jaws of some godawful thingum from another dimension that looks like a cross between Joe Pesci and a lawnmower housing. The late scientist and former human isn't even screaming any more, and his hands seem to have grown long vines or tentacles: There, I find myself thinking with detached and faintly clinical horror, is a guy who will never, ever type 90 words per minute again.

That's it, Professor Nutball: Screw this, screw the project, screw Uncle Sam, and screw you—I am so out of here, boom, I'm a dot, I'm gone.

Running full-tilt down the ruined, red-lit corridor now, that maddening klaxon cycling a groove into the fight-or-flight centers of my brain, jacked up on adrenaline and morphine analog, ready to shoot anything in my path that moves or fails to move, straining my paranoid vision for glimpses of Monster in the swooping white flashes from the rotating, disorienting emergency lights—and who the hell was the wizard of industrial design who decided that the emergency floods should rotate, anyway?—at which point I round a corner and begin to realize that I may be out of luck: At the end of the hall, the Emergency Elevator doors are already closing on a lift full of scientists, surface-bound like so many white-coated lab rats deserting a sinking ship.

KNOW THY ENEMY

ALIEN SLAVE



■ The meek shall inherit the Earth. As soon as they conquer it.

■ He used to rule his lab techs with an iron fist. Now he scoops out their guts with a handful of razors.

ZOMBIE



HEAVY WEAPONS GUY



■ He's chewing a stogie, but you'd better not wait for the cancer to kill him.

■ The piranhas took one look at their new neighbor and leaped onto dry land. We claim no responsibility for nightmares.

ICHTHYOSAUR



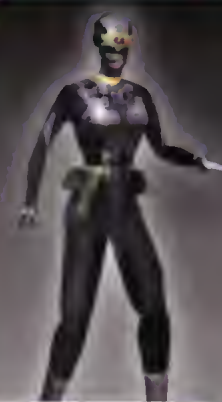
BULLSQUID



■ You can run. You can hide. But it's fast. And if nothing else is handy, you'll do fine for food.

■ Wearing a skin-tight outfit tailored by the people who brought you the Stealth bomber, she's so close to invisible that bats crash into her. But she can see you perfectly.

FEMALE ASSASSIN





BREAK ON THROUGH TO THE OTHER SIDE: If you're quick-witted enough, you might be able to get the boys in uniform to do your work for you.



www.sierra.com/half-life

HALF-LIFE

Developer	Valve
Format	WIN95 CD
Rating	Pending
Price	\$54.95
Order #	70365
Phone	1.800.757.7707

A sinking ship that, let's be clear on this, I have yet to escape!

Wait for me, you unbelievable jerks! I think, still running hopelessly forward. When I realize I'm not gonna make it—and they're not gonna wait for me—I angrily crank off a couple of rounds at them, but miss. The lift doors seal when I'm barely halfway there, and by the time I reach the half-transparent doors, I helplessly watch that miserable pack of traitorous, candy-assed quark-counters swiftly ascending to blessed and enviable safety. Damn it.

About four seconds later, I see them again, only traveling much faster, and going down. Evidently, the emergency elevator system was also damaged in the explosion.

"At the end of the hall, silhouetted in the dim red glow, is a shape that is entirely, utterly wrong."

I barely have time to bellow an avenged "YESSSS!" before I hear the free-falling elevator and its prat-pack cargo smashing to bits and gobbets at the bottom of the shaft. The elevator doors slide open again, and I take a peek down below. Where there was once simply the vertical terminus of a clean, functional, modern-day elevator system, there is now a car crash with nasty bits in it. It's Instant Karma, perfect enough to make me temporarily forget the danger crawling all around me.

Grinning hugely and happily whistling a tune from a Natalie Merchant album, I calmly descend the rungs of the nearby emergency-access ladder to provide mockery and aid, in that order, to the survivors, of which there aren't any. There is, however, a health power-up glinting brightly among the gore-streaked wreckage, and I immediately snatch it up. Finders greeters, losers bleeders, that's what I always say.

Welcome to my nightmare

I turn back around. At the end of the hall, silhouetted in the dim red glow, is a shape that is entirely, utterly wrong. Long ropes or tentacles for fingers. There's an open elevator shaft at my back, and now this...thing...is coming toward me. I can't help wondering if it used to be Professor Nutball. Hope he isn't too ticked about that abandoning-The-Project thing.

I check my pistol. Two clips left. I know it won't be enough. Wish I hadn't capped off at those poor, panicked scientists who were about to die anyway.

"All right then," I sigh, and

start walking to meet the thing halfway, the miserably inadequate pistol in my hand. "Welcome to Earth, whatever you are. I'll be your tour guide...."

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Half-Life's characters don't just look realistic—they behave just as you'd expect them to in real life. Valve's proprietary AI conquers the barrier of "dumb" enemies that exhibit absolutely no concern for self-preservation. Half-Life's characters strive to stay alive. They duck, jump, hide behind barriers to avoid gunfire, and even retreat if outgunned.

Creatures traveling in packs practice deceptively cunning group behavior. While several members of the pack keep your attention, others will attack you from behind. This behavior is carried over to the "monster ecology" in the animal-like alien creatures. Watching houndeyes from afar, you'll see the leader on lookout while the rest of the pack rests. Keep your distance and you may be safe. Get too close, and the leader will alert the pack.

Not every creature has placed you first on its dinner menu, either. Bullsquids, for example, hate headcrabs, and can clear a roomful of the pesky critters with their powerful, swatting tail with amazing precision and speed. Keep that in mind when your back's against the wall with headcrabs a-leapin' and bullsquids close by. The hideous predator just might spare your life—that is, until the room is cleared of headcrabs....

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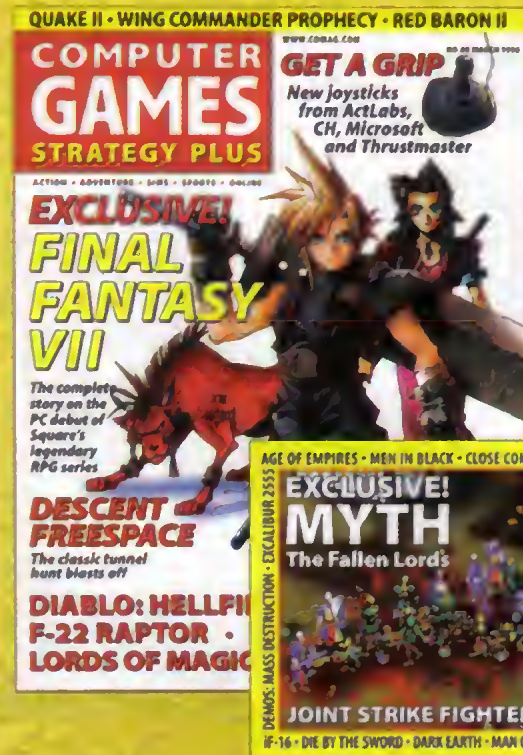
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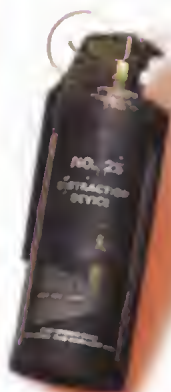
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SWAT

2: Making the World a Safer Place—Again



JUST ANOTHER DAY IN THE LIFE OF A SWAT OFFICER, AS TOLD IN THE MISSION NOTES FROM SWAT 2

By William R. Trotter

AT ROLL CALL, SGT. ALVAREZ JOKINGLY ADMONISHED US: "EVERYBODY READY FOR A BANK robbery?" We asked him why he anticipated a bank heist. "Simple logic," he replied.

"It's payday, it's Friday, and it's the last day of the month. Every bank in LA is bulging with payroll cash. If you were a bank robber, wouldn't you choose today?"

You should have seen his face when the call came in about 10:15, informing us that a robbery was in progress in a suburban bank very similar to that one in North Hollywood. No one in SWAT wants this kind of situation to occur, but this is precisely the kind of incident we're trained to handle and we were all eager to do our best. Here's how it went down:

10:30—The Chief arrives on the scene and gets briefed by the cops who're already there. One of the tellers tripped the silent alarm as soon as she realized there was a holdup in progress; the black-and-whites responded in a matter of seconds. When the bad guys saw all the cops outside, they freaked. Now they're barricaded inside, holding multiple hostages, and they've cut the phone lines.

10:32—The Chief authorizes the leader of Primary Element to deliver a throw phone to the bank's front door. Next, he orders my squad, Second Element, along with a sniper unit to deploy in support





SMARTER THAN YOUR AVERAGE AI: The artificial intelligence behind SWAT 2 changes the parameters in each scenario you return to. What works once might not work again.

for a "dynamic entry" (SWAT-ese for "busting down the door"!), but then he puts us on hold—seems the robbers have demanded a Brinks armored truck as a getaway car. They want us to leave it near the front door, with the engine running. "Let's do it," he says. "Let them think we're cooperating—it'll keep them off balance."

10:46—The Brinks truck pulls up, and suddenly things start to get hot. Two figures emerge from the entrance and we hear the sniper's report: "We have a life-threatening situation—suspect holding gun to hostage."

"Take the shot!" orders the Chief.

It's amazing how swift, accurate, and deadly a single bullet can be when a trained marksman fires it. One shot, one kill. As soon as they hear the rifle's *crack!*, Primary Element surges forward and grabs the hostage, pulling her to safety.

One down and two to go. After a brief, obscenity-laden message from the robbers, the throw phone goes dead. So we've freed one hostage and killed one crook, but by doing so, we've lost communications with the inside,

of Primary. We form a containment perimeter around the bank's rear entrance. The sniper team takes position on the roof of an adjacent building, where the spotter enjoys a good view of the bank's interior.

10:35—Primary Element makes its approach. Their scout "mirrors" the front entrance and signals that it's clear of any hostage or suspect activity. The element leader, holding his MP-5 in the "high-ready" position, sneaks up to the front door, places the throw phone an arm's length from the doors, and retires. Two tense minutes pass, and then a woman comes out to retrieve the phone. The sniper reports: "Hostage spotted, female. She doesn't appear to be in imminent danger."

The element leader is tempted to execute a hostage-grab: the woman's just standing there, holding the throw phone as if it were a live grenade. But he decides the risk is too great. The hostage, responding

to angry motions from one of her captors inside, returns to the bank.

The dynamic entry

10:39—One of the tellers makes contact over the throw phone. Her voice is shaky, but she's not hysterical, which is a good sign. There are four other hostages, all employees, and, as we suspected, three robbers. The situation is tense, but not out of control.

The Chief orders us to prepare



LET'S TAKE IT OUTSIDE: The members of a SWAT team can be called into action anytime, anywhere—as will you in SWAT 2.

along with any complacency the suspects might have had. These are the equations in SWAT operations, and sometimes the line between the plusses and the minuses is very thin indeed!

10:49—The Chief orders us to prepare for another dynamic entry. My squad will provide the diversion, while Primary smashes in through the front doors.

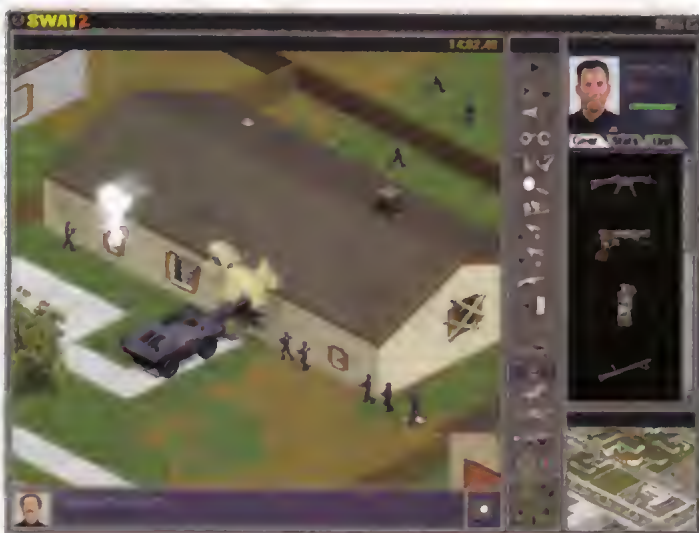
The diversion & grab

10:50—My right hand grips a flashbang; I can sense the presence of the others behind me, and I know they'll protect me, as I would protect them. A half-hour of real action has made us a tighter unit than all those weeks of training.

Suddenly, I hear the Chief's command in my earphone: "Initiate!!"

I prime the flashbang and lob it through the nearest window, then duck. Even with my head down and a concrete wall between the blast and me, the light is searing and the explosion shatteringly loud. Primary Element hits the front door, each member going through in alternating order so no one crosses someone else's line of fire.

10:51—Primary team leader scans the bank lobby. Suddenly, a robber emerges from behind a counter, his Glock pointed at a hostage's head. Primary team



COMMANDING INTERFACE: The SWAT 2 interface provides easy access to the weapons and tools of the trade.

leader tries to seize the initiative: "You don't have a chance. Drop the gun!" I won't repeat what the bad guy said in reply. The element leader quietly tells his rear guard to take a shot. Then he challenges the suspect once more. The robber seems to go nuts—he lurches to one side and that's the split second the rear guard is waiting for.

A four-round burst from his SMG-9 and the suspect takes two in the shoulder. Unfortunately, he empties half a magazine from his Glock on the way down and the rear guard takes one in the body armor. A Glock round at that range, even one that hits armor, strikes like a sledgehammer, and the cop goes down, groaning and dazed. The hostage flees, screaming, into the element leader's arms.

10:53—The Chief orders my squad in through the back door. So far, from my point of view, everything has been like another training exercise. Inside, it's very different: there are real lives at stake. Two hostages and one bad guy are still missing. There's only one place they could still be: inside the vault.

10:54—All nonessential personnel are cleared from the area.

We could, of course, blow the vault door, but only at the risk of injuring everyone inside. Sooner or later our bad guy will get hungry, but that might take hours.

Sometimes, though, situations just fizzle out. The vault door opens a crack, revealing a hostage and a frightened-looking suspect. "Drop your weapon and come out with your hands raised!" commands the nearest element leader. "OK, OK, whatever you say!" replies the robber, dropping his weapon as though the metal had suddenly grown red-hot.

The end was sudden and decisive: two assaulters grab the visible hostage, the element leader grabs the suspect; the rest of us cover them with our weapons. In case the bad guy makes a last-minute grab for his gun. He doesn't.

So that's how things went on my first SWAT 2 mission. One bad guy killed, one badly wounded, the other captured without incident; one cop injured, but all the hostages rescued unharmed. **f**

William R. Trotter is Senior Writer for PC Gamer and the author of 11 published books.

IT'S A LIFE-SAVING BUSINESS

Few of us will ever find ourselves in the situation described in this story. But few of us will ever be members of a Special Weapons and Tactics squad. Games such as SWAT 2, however, can give us a taste of that experience. Six members of the Fresno SWAT unit and one from the LA SWAT recently played the game and left no doubt about that. "It reminded me very much of what I do at work," said Officer Richard Hill. "Every time I made a mistake, I had to pay for it. In real life, this is really happening to us."

"This game makes you think, right down to the tactics that you're going to use in positioning your men," said Officer Richard Massa. "It shows the general public that SWAT officers have a lot to consider. It's not a shoot-'em-up business, it's a life-saving business."



www.siemer.com/swat2



SWAT 2

Developer	Yosemite Entertainment
Format	WIN95 CD
Rating	Teens
Price	\$49.95
Order #	70310
Phone	1.800.757.7707

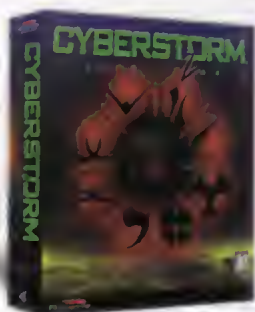


Cyberstorm 2 combines real-time gameplay with the original's rock-solid strategy to create a fascinating hybrid



Tips from the Front: Cyberstorm 2

By Mark H. Walker



www.sierra.com/cstorm2

Cyberstorm 2

Developer	Dynamix
Format	WIN95 CD
Rating	Kids to Adults
Price	\$39.95
Order #	69987
Phone	1.800.757.7707

M ISSIONFORCE: *Cyberstorm* was a critically acclaimed, turn-based ROM of fun. It provided legions of *EarthSiege* fans with a sit-and-ponder strategy alternative to the furious action of *EarthSiege* mechanized combat simulations.

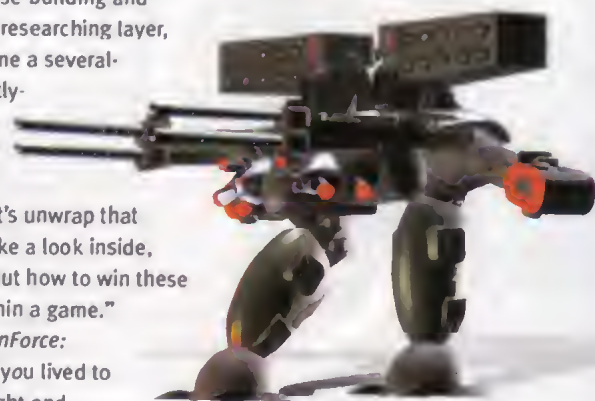
Given the original *Cyberstorm*'s popularity, it doesn't take a gene-splicer to see why the creative types at Dynamix have followed it up with *Cyberstorm 2: Corporate Wars*. The game combines elements of real-time play with the original's rock-solid strategy to create a fascinating new hybrid. But it

doesn't stop there. *Cyberstorm 2: Corporate Wars*' multiple styles of play (real-time, turn-based, simultaneous turn-based), coupled with a new strategic base-building and technology-researching layer, give the game a several-games-tightly-wrapped-into-one-neat-package feel. Let's unwrap that package, take a look inside, and figure out how to win these "games within a game."

In *MissionForce: Cyberstorm* you lived to fight. OK, fight and

build killer HERCs. Still, if your on-field tactics were sharp, you'd win—at least if you could make it past that first Cybrid base.

The same isn't true for



Cyberstorm 2. Yeah, you still have to wield a wicked HERC (or tank or anti-grav vehicle), but how technologically advanced that HERC is, what that HERC is fighting, and the security of that HERC's home base will depend on your leadership and clever resource management.

Getting your act together

Pick a corporation, any corporation. Which one is largely a matter of personal taste. If you like Cybrids (yeah, you can play Cybrids in *Cyberstorm 2*), pick Interstellar Strategic Initiative. If you prefer something a little more high-tech, buy into Hypersonic.

Now pick a planet, any planet. Some, like Atlas, have denser terrain than others; some, like Oasis, are open desert. The planet types have very different effects on combat. Deserts dramatically inhibit ballistic weapons. Lava flows tend to augment plasma weapons. If you like anti-grav vehicles, choose a dense-terrain planet that will hinder tank and HERC movement. This will let your

"flyers" zip in for quick shots, then dart out of range of that cumbersome HERC or tank.

Once you've set up shop, upgrade your Launch Pad. You'll want to take as many vehicles—whether HERCs, Cybrids, tanks, or anti-grav vehicles—as possible on each mission. Although high-quality HERCs can often compensate for numerical deficits, superior numbers are a comfy advantage. Remember the words of Joseph Stalin: "Quantity has a quality all its own."

Another thing: Put those scientists to work before you set out on that first HERC-busting mission. It's best—at least in the beginning—to put your hard-earned cash where it will improve several areas at once: computers, drives, and reactors are good examples. Investing in specific weapons is tempting. A blast cannon is a sexy piece of equipment, but better computers will raise the hit percentages of all weapons, and better drives will enhance the speed of all units.

Keeping up with the Joneses

Once you have a few missions

under your belt, it's time to upgrade your property. Once again, ramp up your Launch Pad technology.

By now you'll be encountering six to eight enemy units per mission, and you'll need at least five (some corporations, Unitech for example, can only take four) of your own to deal with them.

If you haven't already upgraded the Bioderm Facility, now's the time to do it. Bioderms profoundly impact their vehicle's performance. You can't, however, get that profound impact without paying for it—both in the 'derm's engineering costs and in the facility-upgrade cost.

Advanced Bioderms will increase the number of times your lasers fry armor...or whatever.

By midgame your opposition will come calling, and it's a good idea to spruce up the place with a couple of weapon turrets before they arrive. Make sure you spread the turrets out for maximum coverage. Turrets are tough opponents, and you'll be glad to have a multi-turret welcoming committee when rival corporations visit.

Information is also a tough opponent and a valuable ally. Consult the Status menu often and use the information it provides to plan your strategy. For example, if you are third on the corporate totem pole, and CUC is just ahead, target their facilities.

Cyberstorm 2's strategic game is fascinating, but no matter how well you plan, you must rule the



BEST OF BOTH WORLDS: *CyberStorm 2* allows you to choose between real-time or turn-based play.



THE HERC BASE: Put your scientists to work developing and building state-of-the-art weapons.

...you still have to wield a **wicked HERC** (or **tank** or **anti-grav vehicle**), but how **technologically advanced** that HERC is, what that HERC is **fighting**, and the security of that **HERC's home base** will **depend on** your **leadership** and clever **resource management**.



THE CHOICE IS YOURS: From several corporations, planets, and terrains—the choices you make determine your mission!

battlefield to win. Let's take a gander at some useful battlefield hints and tactics.

The right unit for the right job...

HERCs are great. These "walkers"—10-meter-tall chassis bristling with high-tech weapons—are not only formidable opponents, but the coolest-looking units in the game. Nevertheless, solar systems are

...a **120mm autocannon punches** through unshielded armor like a **nail gun**, but will **rarely scratch a shielded** target. On the other hand, **lasers cut shields** like butter, but are generally **impotent against armor**.



shield-busting EMP guns, lasers, and PlasGuns first, then wading in with anti-armor weapons like the 120mm auto-cannons. The real-time game, how-

not conquered with HERCs alone. *Cyberstorm 2* includes a couple of new sci-fi favorites to play with: anti-grav vehicles and tanks. Employing them properly can often be the key to victory.

Tanks: Tanks are big and bad. Not as bad as HERCs, but bad nevertheless. Although they carry better armor and weapons than the light HERCs, they have trouble traversing mountainous terrain. Use them when funds are tight or when you're fighting in the open. (In certain circumstances, tanks are actually preferable—for instance, when you're forced to fight a defensive action.)

Anti-grav vehicles: The air units of *Cyberstorm 2*, anti-grav vehicles are best employed as scouts, or for quick dart-in, dart-out attacks. Don't try to fight a battle of attrition with them or you will wind up on the "attrited" end of the stick.

...and the right weapon

Ever wonder what that swirly-glowy stuff is that surrounds a HERC when you connect with your weapons? It's an energy shield, and you must eliminate it before you can penetrate an enemy's armor. Problem is, not all weapons dissipate shields equally. For example, a 120mm autocannon punches through unshielded armor like a nail gun, but will rarely scratch a shielded target. On the other hand, lasers cut shields like butter, but are generally impotent against armor.


In turn-based *Cyberstorm 2* you have time to fire your weapons manually, using the

ever, moves too quickly for this type of management minutia. Fortunately computers revel in minutia. Set your order preferences to Auto-Fire at Selected Target, and the computer will empty the most effective weapon against the targeted enemy.

Keep your eyes open

Take a minute to look around. Learn to use terrain wisely. Certain types of terrain, such as rocky ground, provide cover, making your units harder to hit. Other locales—hills, cinder cones, and so on—can hide you from your opponent.

If you have the Extreme Information option engaged, you can see how much of an opponent is shielded by terrain (or other units). The less you see of your target, the smaller your chances of hitting it. Remember, however, if you can't see them, they can't see you. Maneuvering out of an enemy's line of sight will force them to use valuable reactor energy to advance to a more advantageous firing position.

Well, the wrapping is off and a few secrets revealed. The game is much too deep to cover in just one strategy article. Nevertheless, we hope this primer helps you to play a wee bit better, and lights the path to some improved corporate butt-kicking in each of the "games" wrapped in *Cyberstorm 2: Corporate Wars*. 

Mark H. Walker was a notorious MissionForce: *Cyberstorm* addict. He lives in rural Virginia where he games, writes, and parents for a living.

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Hellfire: The Dark Lord

If it plays better than *Diablo*, adds new territory to *Diablo*, and creates a new character for *Diablo*—it must be *Hellfire*!



www.sierra.com/hellfire

By Eric Carlton

THE GREAT DOOR SWINGS open wide to reveal a horde of the hideous undead. The room is thick with skeletons, zombies, and other unholy creatures, but towering above the thronging mass of decaying flesh and bone you see the most loathsome visage a living being could ever imagine. More than twice the height of the tallest man, the great Skeleton King, his head topped by a crown of gold and jewels, his mighty sword held high in anticipation of battle, stands astride his lesser minions. All at once a great cry wells up from

the gathered legions and they begin to advance in unison. With only your modest weapons and a handful of magic spells, you leap into battle; only your skill and the strength that lies coiled in your sinewy frame will determine your fate.

Just your average Tuesday night for anyone who's ever played *Diablo*, *Computer Gaming World's* "Game of the Year," brought to you by the hit factory

known as Blizzard Entertainment. (Blizzard's *Warcraft II* was *PC Gamers'* winner the year before.)

As great as *Diablo* is (a fact that's been universally confirmed by almost every game reviewer in the country), you can never get enough of a good thing. And thanks to Sierra, you

can now revisit the beleaguered town of Tristram. In *Hellfire*, the only authorized expansion pack available for *Diablo*, Sierra continues what only



Hellfire

Developer	Synergistic
Format	WIN 95 CD
Rating	Mature-Ages 17+
Price	\$19.95
Order #	69957
Phone	1.800.757.7707

of Expansion Packs

Blizzard itself has done before. Sierra has created a best-of-breed product that does what all sequels and expansion add-ons should strive to do:

◆ **IMPROVE ON THE GAMEPLAY**

Hellfire's all new quests and Non-Player Characters involve you in the game more fully than in the original.

◆ **ELIMINATE BUGS AND AN-**

NOYANCES With the new jog/walk toggle available in *Hellfire*, you spend a lot less time in town doing repetitive tasks, such as buying potions and selling useless items. Plus the Healer now recognizes your importance to his town and he heals you automatically when you approach his dwelling.

◆ **ADD NEW TERRITORY AND**

EXPERIENCES New levels and foes are more intriguing than anything in the original game.

I've got to get a life!

Two things in my mind make this game stand out: First is the way that the *Hellfire* add-on turned the original levels of the game into a brand-new experience. (This is in addition to the new levels that *Hellfire* provides.)

The second is that I had never successfully been able to involve my girlfriend, Sarah, in *any* computer game until *Hellfire* came along. When she started to play this expansion pack, I offered to play the original with her in multiplayer mode. She would have none of that—once I initiated her, she only wanted to play *Hellfire* by herself. For the first time I was a computer widower.

When I finally got her attention back, she told me that she found the Non-Player Characters in the new quests in *Hellfire* to be integral to her enjoyment of the game. She also liked the thrill of getting powerful new items to improve her abilities

(something I like to call the Virtual Shopping Syndrome...).

I never thought I'd see the day

After months of multiplayer play with *Diablo* and other network-enabled games, and having the luxury of owning three networked computers, I never thought anybody would prefer a single-player version of any game with network capabilities. Yet I suddenly found myself, all of my friends, and my heretofore girlfriend playing (gasp) single-player *Hellfire*.



"If ever there were a game that captivated everyone around me, Hellfire is it."



WREAKING HAVOC: The Monk is new on the scene, but he's no rookie. He has well-balanced statistics, new skills, and a wicked attack with his staff.



HOW DO I KILL THEE? LET ME COUNT THE WAYS: *Hellfire* boasts new spells, new levels, new monsters, new quests—and all the mayhem you can handle.



TAKING STOCK: Check your inventory frequently to keep track of all the new items and spells found in Hellfire (not to mention everything that's been carried over from Diablo).



I LOVE THE SMELL OF IMMOLATION IN THE MORNING: By shooting fireballs in a 360-degree arc, this spell makes an excellent weapon when you're surrounded by monsters.

If ever there were a game that captivated everyone around me, *Hellfire* is it. The appeal of *Hellfire* is universal: I have introduced friends, family, and business associates from all tax brackets to the game and they all love it. *Diablo* and *Hellfire* are surely two of the few games that have evened the playing field previously dominated by male audiences. These games involve everyone, whether male or female, old or young, rogues

"These games involve **everyone**, whether male or female, old or young, rogues or **warriors**."

or warriors.

If anything can attest to the addictive quality of this game, I think my situation can. Anyone know of a 12-step program that might cure this addiction so I can get my girlfriend back?

What's new in Hellfire

New character

Hellfire's Monk is definitely my favorite character in the two games. The character's stats are as well-balanced as the Rogue, while adding some new twists. The new skill is the Search skill, which also manifests as a scroll in the game if you play another character class. The Monk has a wicked attack when using a staff, allowing him to strike multiple opponents with a single blow. One caveat is that the Monk tops out at 80 natural magic points (the Sorcerer, for example, can have 255!), so be sure to keep powerful weapons and armor around for protection in the end game.

New Items

There are 30 new items in *Hellfire*, with more than 10 unique items that are either found at specific points in the dungeon or are bestowed on you upon the completion of a quest.

New spells

Six new spells will have you sucking up mana like it was ice-cold Yoo-Hoo: Warp, Search, Reflect, Berserk, Wall of Lightning (drool), and Immolation (I'm really not a pyromaniac, normally).

New monsters

Twenty-three new enemies and six new master demons will infuriate and beguile you, while being wholly entertaining at the same time.

New levels

There are eight new levels.

If you are lucky enough to retrace your steps and come up with a sturdy-enough character, or if you have a godlike hero that you can import from your old *Diablo* days, you might just best the demon of demons. In addition, Sierra offers high-level characters as a



download from their website if you feel like you've already taught the ugly beasts a lesson the first time.

New quests

If you are savvy enough to complete the levels from the top down for a second time, you'll be pleased to find that Sierra has crafted many new quests for your enjoyment, even in the original *Diablo* levels.

New non-player characters

While you control your choice of the Warrior, Rogue, Sorcerer, or Monk character, the townspeople that inhabit Tristram have an agenda of their own. The townspeople and several creatures you encounter in the underground levels are the Non-Player Characters in the game.

For those of you new to Role-Playing Games (RPGs), you are able to interact with NPCs, but their actions and responses are controlled by the computer. All of the familiar NPCs of *Diablo* are still there; Sierra has gone the extra mile in *Hellfire*, introducing many more NPCs that add to the background story surrounding the add-on. Make sure you interact with all of them, because this is the only way you'll see some of the new items in the game (for example, after completing his quest, the farmer will give you an interesting little trinket that affects how much you can carry in your inventory).

Dungeon Diving 101

Here are a few hints and tips to help you make sure *Diablo* won't cast your soul into the abyss.

Hellfire requires a complete version of *Diablo* to run, and while it is single-player only, you can transfer existing single-player characters from *Diablo*. (If you don't, you'll have to play all the original levels over again—though this time with the new *Hellfire* quests.) If you've let your old characters wander off your hard disk, you can download one of the high-level characters Sierra has made available on their website.

Be sure to download the patch from Sierra's website (www.sierra.com) to fix several small problems involving the difficulty, levels, and quests. You can play the game to completion without it, but the experience is much more involved and intense if you take the time to do the download.

The Hive is relatively easy, but the Crypt is tough. Don't expect to find a lot of potions on this level, even though the monsters appear like popcorn in a microwave.

The **Berserk** spell works through the Crypt level, but you don't get character points for the possessed-creatures kills.

Since the **Search** skill of the Monk takes no mana points, you can cast it an absurd number of times in a row; the spell will last longer the more times it is cast.

In *Hellfire* you must make sure that you build up your character before attempting the later levels. If you choose to play from level 1 again, you must make sure that you finish every level. Only then will you have enough experience to deal with the later levels.



YOU'LL NEVER WALK ALONE: Whether you're in the Hive (top) or the Crypt (bottom), watch out for such horrors as the misshapen Tomb Rat, the vile Hork Demon, and the ghostly Hellboar.

The Oils of Accuracy, Sharpness, and Blacksmith and their Great Oil counterparts are incredibly strategic. You can now have even a very basic weapon that has plus damage (meaning it will inflict more damage than expected) and pluses to hit (meaning greater accuracy and the increased likelihood that you'll connect with the first blow), and that you can repair without going up to town. *n*

According to Sarah, Eric Carlton is a very intelligent, handsome, and sexy young man, but he cheats at *Hellfire*!





PUSHING THE ENVELOPE



You'll be the Lord of the Sky after Pro Pilot initiates you into the world of rolls, spins, stalls—and the infamous Hammerhead

By John Petrick

Pushing the envelope can perhaps be best described in non-fly-boy terms as playing cards with fate. Sometimes you get a good hand, sometimes not. When you take that concept a step further and stuff your butt into the cockpit of a Cessna Skyhawk 172, pushing the envelope may not be that smart of an idea. But boy, can it be fun.

Since many of us working-class slobs can't afford to jump in a plane and do circles around the local airport until our hearts

are content, *Sierra Pro Pilot* has provided us a means to learn to fly at leisure.

Logging a lot of flight time and receiving quality instruction without leaving the comforting glow of our computer monitors is now possible.

From rookie to Blue Angel

You won't just be able to jump

into the plane and start executing your audition moves for the Blue Angels without some training. Practice really does make perfect in this simulation. First things first, check out the Ground School, a very comprehensive and thorough series of instructional videos and lessons meant to make Lords of the Skies out of you and I.

The instructors

will go over things pretty quickly, so it's best to take notes. You'll learn about

everything from Instruments, Controls, and Communications to how to do a Constant Altitude Turn to doing Lazy Eights. You can even play the same video over and over until you understand what a Vy Climb is without fear that your instructor will bash you over the head with his (or



www.sierra.com/pilot

Sierra Pro Pilot

Developer **Dynamix**

Format **WIN95 CD**

Rating **Kids to Adults**

Price **\$54.95**

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Phone **1.800.757.7707**



BOGEY AT 12 O'CLOCK: Spin, roll, and stall all over the friendly skies of this sim's North America. Gain experience unobtainable in real life. Fly through the Grand Canyon—there's no FAA to chase you down!

her) clipboard.

When it's time to put theory into practice, you can jump behind the prop of five different kinds of planes: the aforementioned Cessna Skyhawk 172, the Beechcraft Bonanza v35, the Beechcraft King Air B200, the Beechcraft Baron B58, and the impressive Cessna CitationJet 525. Each plane is rendered in exacting detail, right down to every switch in the cockpit. Starting out, it might be in your best interests to go with the Cessna Skyhawk 172 as it is the most forgiving of the planes and you'll need all of the forgiveness you can get in the early going.

Taking off from the runway can be an adventure in itself. Once you get clearance from the tower to bolt off into the wild blue yon-

der, be sure to check for approaching aircraft so someone doesn't land on your tail as you speed down the tarmac.

Once in the air, you'll want to get comfortable with the controls and probably push the envelope a bit just to get the hang of what and what not to do while in the air. And since it's a simulation, you don't have to worry about pushing a little too far and causing any undue agony to your hide or your checkbook.

Time for some airborne aerobics

With the basic flight mechanics under your belt, you'll probably want to start seeing what you can get away with up in the friendly skies.

One of the first maneuvers to

try is the infamous stall. To stall your engine, pull your throttle all of the way out, and pull the nose up gradually. You'll start to lose lift, your airspeed will drop to zero, and your stall-warning horn will start screaming like a banshee. To recover from your stall, take your throttle back up to full power while lowering your nose back to the horizon. Maintaining the level horizon is the key to pulling off this maneuver. Your plane will want to lurch downward and put you in a particularly nasty dive if you don't do it correctly.

Once you have the stall down, you'll probably want to try some spins. Spins are tricky little buggers to pull off and require a lot of practice. To throw your plane into a spin, pull your throttle all of the way out and pitch your nose up slightly until you stall. Once you stall, turn full rudder to the right or left. You should be plummeting in no time flat. Before reaching for that airsickness bag, bring your throttle back up to full power and move your rudder back to the center position, all the while increasing your climb until you are level with the horizon again.

When you've recovered from your inevitable dizzy spell, try to do the dreaded Hammerhead. To pull this trick off, you'll need

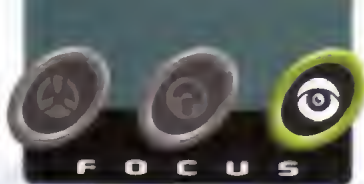
THE WIZARD OF FLIGHT PLANNING

You can easily plan a route from Point A to Point B with Pro Pilot's handy dandy Flight Planning Wizard. Go to the Planning menu and select Create Flight Plan, then choose VFR or IFR flight, which aircraft to fly, your cruise settings, and of course your departure and destination points. Don't know the airport code? Just type in the name of the city or location and the wizard will show you the closest matches as well as give you all sorts of useful information about the airport in question.

Once you have your plan figured out, you can view it on the map, and then set your weather manually or randomly. All the information for your trip, including your trip time, distance, and amount of fuel needed, is then added to your flight log. You can save all this information so you can fly at will and resume your trip at any time—which is especially handy for those midflight trips to the kitchen for more pie!



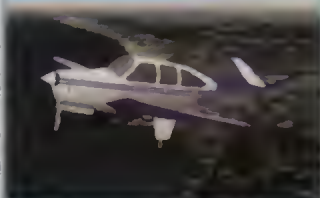
SCENE STEALER: The terrain you'll fly over will remind you of home because it is home, from Lady Liberty to the Space Needle.



PLANE GEOMETRY



CESSNA SKYHAWK 172*



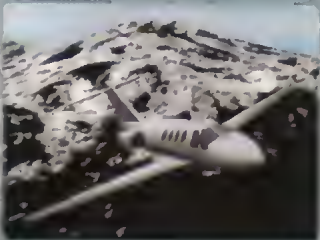
BEECHCRAFT BONANZA V35*



BEECHCRAFT BARON B58*



BEECHCRAFT KING AIR B200*



CESSNA CITATIONJET 525*

to maintain a constant altitude and then switch to full power on the throttle. When full power is achieved, pull back on the yoke until you're about 20 degrees nose-high, and maintain your climb. Right before your airspeed reaches zero, push forward on the yoke to avoid stalling your wing (or lift). When done properly, your plane will suddenly pitch about 20 degrees nose-down, then back up and then down again until you level back out. Think of it as an especially treacherous day in the surf.

A roll isn't just a tasty in-flight snack, it's probably one of the more dangerous maneuvers to try while swooping through the skies. To execute a roll, keep the plane level and then pitch down about 2 degrees nose-low. Hit the ailerons hard left or hard right while keeping your rudder straight. You should begin to pitch into your roll and lose altitude. To recover, straighten the ailerons and raise your nose no more than 5 degrees. Be sure to have a lot of altitude before you try this one out or you'll find yourself doing a face-plant into terra firma faster than you can reach for your airsickness bag.

What happens when a gull flies into your engine intake and leaves you **without power** at 5,000 feet? You can't really simulate the gull part, but you can shut down your engine and try to land. It's not as hard as it sounds, because most planes are designed to glide in the event something catastrophic happens to the engine. The first order of business is not to panic. Keep the plane level and descend very slowly back to earth. You will have to baby the aircraft all of the way down, but the plane will land. Be wary of nasty crosswinds and make sure your landing gear is down before you land. Reproduce this stunt over heavily populated areas for a more dramatic effect.




PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE: You can't step aboard a plane as a rookie and emerge one flight later as Chuck Yeager. Start your career at the Pro Pilot Ground School and take advantage of the instructional videos.

Head to head with Pro Pilot

It's one thing to practice and then master these moves. Once you have them down, you can spin, roll, and stall all over the friendly skies of North America. The terrain features in *Pro Pilot* are exceptional and can be breathtaking to behold whether you're flying over the Bay Area, practicing Hammerheads in the Grand Canyon, or buzzing Seattle's Space Needle. Everything is represented in painstaking detail. You can challenge yourself by adding nasty crosswinds to your flight plan, adjusting your visibility, or even

selecting what time of day you want to fly.

Pro Pilot is possibly the most comprehensive flight simulator to come along in quite some time. It is unparalleled in its depth and realism, providing a compelling challenge to novice flyers as well as the most grizzled veteran wingmen. If there is a challenge you are willing to face or a lesson you may have not yet learned, *Pro Pilot* will meet you head to head on a level and stunning field. 

While John Petrick has never gotten airsick, his prowess with seasickness is legendary.

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LIFE AND DEATH AT 6,500 FEET

In Red Baron II, all's never quiet on the Western front

By Mark H. Walker

On the following story you'll be taken on patrol high above the trenches in World War I. You'll find many tips on tactics along the way; learn them well and you may live to fly your next patrol in *Red Baron II*. — Editor

It was a fine day. Much too fine for killing. But we didn't choose the stage, nor the script, we merely played our parts. There were two of us that morning: Eddie Brown and me. Eddie had been all grins at breakfast, excitedly reading his latest letter from Annie as he wolfed down a small mountain of sausage and eggs.

"Smell that, would you?" he chided, waving the perfumed letter under my nose. He closed his eyes as he once again passed the paper over his lips. "She's sweet, I tell ya." He paused, studied the eggs on his fork and grinned. "I don't need a plane today; I'll just spread my arms." He laughed, and tucking his

hands under his armpits, flapped his elbows.

Me? I didn't feel so good. I was tired. Way past the kind of tired I got spiking tobacco back home. Yeah, the work in the fields was hard, but Mom always had a good meal ready for me, and a bed with fresh sheets to sleep in. And of course harvest season ended. This war never would.

You don't fight a war from chalkboards
We had the morning Combat Air

Sure, **ENGINE AND PILOT HITS** are more dramatic, but **SHREDDING A CONTROL SURFACE** is **THE QUICKEST WAY TO DOWN AN AIRCRAFT.**



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Red Baron II

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Patrol. There was a munitions factory about three miles from our aerodrome, and the skipper told us to keep a protective eye on it. The factory manufactured FT-17 tanks like the ones that Lt. Col. Patton's boys had used on the St. Mihiel salient, and intelligence said that the Germans might risk a bombing run. But they were never right. What did they know about war? You don't fight a war from chalkboards. You fight it from your gut.

We climbed to 6,500 feet in our Spad XIII's and banked into a lazy oval over our aerodrome. I was lead, Eddie was wing.

There were traces of clouds at 10,000, but otherwise it was a gorgeous day. The Janeau sparkled like a silver ribbon as it wound through the red-gold-green French countryside. Back home, Carolina might be playing Duke. I might be on that team—might be, if it weren't for this war. I glanced at Eddie, 50 yards off my right wing. He flashed back a wide grin and flapped his elbows.

Five minutes later they came. I was kidding myself, I guess. With my luck there was no way the bombers wouldn't show. The factory's air-raid sirens began to

howl. I craned my neck to one side, then the other,

the engine droning in my ears. I could see Eddie's head bob as he did the same. We looked at each other and shrugged. A false alarm maybe? We both knew better.

Boom. Boom-crack. That was the heavy stuff. We saw dirty cotton balls blooming to the south of the base. I reached for my flare pistol, but Eddie needed no prompting. He knew as well as I, where there is smoke, there is fire—anti-aircraft fire. And anti-aircraft fire could only mean one thing—bombers.

We headed for the flak curtain, careful to stay above 5,000 feet. The big flak guns are a nuisance, but terribly inaccurate. On the other hand, the heavy machine guns could send up a deadly stream of fire. I wanted to stay above it, even if it was intended for the Bosch.

Two Junkers J.1s emerged from the flak as we approached. They were on our left.



SUDDEN IMPACT: These are simulations of the real planes that flew in World War I. Pay attention to the cockpit instrumentation—it's not there just for show!

A PILOT'S BEST FRIEND

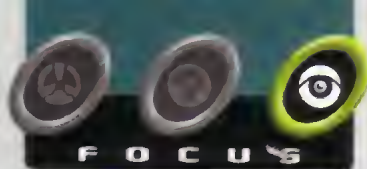


Frank Luke had just one friend in the 27th Aero Squadron: Joseph Wherner, his wingman. When Wherner was shot down while protecting Luke, his death pushed the emotional Luke over the edge. He later stole one of his squadron's Spads and went up alone. Mistake: Luke was wounded and forced to land behind enemy lines, where he died in a gun battle with German troops. (Legend has it that Luke pulled his gun first.) In 1919 Frank Luke was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor.

MORAL: It's dangerous to be a wingman. But don't leave home without one.



MODERATION IN ALL THINGS: Avoid prolonged machine gun bursts—the heat will jam your guns. And hold off until you're within 50 yards of your target—you're unlikely to hit anything beyond that distance.



CRITICAL CONDITION

One thing you will notice right away is that *Red Baron II* is a richly detailed, historical design. Every attempt has been made to immerse the player into the feeling of World War I aviation. The look of the interface, martial music, sound, and historical commentary give that 'being there' effect like few other games I've ever played." - OGR.COM

"...one of the best experiences I have ever had playing a flight simulator. Emphasis is on the word **play** because *Red Baron II* is damn fun!"

- GAME-REVOLUTION.COM

Red Baron II is a great, historically rich WWI combat simulation, maybe the best ever" - PCME.COM

"If you're wondering about the quality of this title, set your mind at ease: The Baron is back!"

- Tim Elhajj, GamePen

My struts creaked as we banked right, then left, approaching them from behind and below. Bombers are simple, at least if you stay in their blind spot. The rear gunner can't see what is on his tail, and couldn't shoot it if he did. So the trick is to come at them from behind.

They're simple, but no cake-walk. My Junkers pilot flicked his plane side to side, opposing the rudder and ailerons, and swinging the Junkers like a pendulum. The rear gunner would squeeze off a burst whenever he saw me, but the shells flew wild, passing over my head.

My Vickers were silent. I knew that the chance of hitting anything from greater than 50 yards was remote. So I waited, slowly closing the distance to the bobbing Junker. I flew smoothly, avoiding the temptation to react to each of the bomber's moves. On my right I could hear Eddie's guns chatter.

The quickest way to the kill

Slowly, like a fish on a line, I reeled the Germans in. Gently, almost wishing my sights to their target, I aimed at the Maltese Cross on the underside of the Junker's left wing. Sure, engine and pilot hits are more dramatic, but shredding a control surface is the quickest way to down an aircraft. I squeezed a short burst, then another, avoiding the temptation to mash the firing button for too long. Heat is a Vickers' worst enemy, and long, barrel-heating bursts often jam them.

The bullets claimed their due. The wing's fabric tore, and a



NEVER GIVE AN INCH: Once you've spotted the enemy, you must turn toward him. Diving or turning away exposes you to attacks from the rear—and a good marksman will make you pay.

strut splintered. The pilot's head snapped toward his damaged wing, mouth agape. Another

saw the stream of red-white shells plow into Eddie's engine. Fingers of fire leaked from the engine cowl.

"I'm coming Eddie," I screamed, knowing he couldn't hear me. I dove for the Junkers and its life-



burst and the Junkers dove into a crazy, flat spin.

As I turned to follow my stricken Junkers to its grave, I saw Eddie Brown die.

They were below me. The pilot of the other Junkers had stalled the bomber, dropping the tail so the gunner could engage Eddie. I

sucking gunner. Eddie's Spad flew level. Maybe he'll make it. But I knew he

The **REAR GUNNER** can't see what's on his tail, and **COULDN'T SHOOT** if he did, so **THE TRICK IS TO COME AT THEM FROM BEHIND.**



CAT AND MOUSE: In stalking your enemy, try to keep a respectful distance between you and any troops on the ground. Even "friendly fire" can be deadly.

couldn't. The flames, fiercely fanned by the onrushing wind, raced down the fuselage. As I watched, Eddie grabbed the wing, pulled himself out of the cockpit, and dove out of his flaming craft. His last words were a garbled scream. Aaaaannieee.

I screwed my eyes closed, trying to shut off the scream, the war, the world. When I opened them, the Junkers filled my sights. The gunner was working frantically with his gun. A jam!

The face of battle

He glanced up, perhaps hearing my engine. Our eyes locked. He took his hands off the gun and shook his head. I had heard of

pilots letting helpless victims fly free. I wondered if any of them had heard Eddie's scream. I crushed the firing button, sending a fusillade of shells into the Junker.

I didn't have to follow the Junker down; I knew it was a kill. I turned for base, more tired than ever. The sun shone brightly, somewhere—an ocean away—life was normal, boys played football, and a young girl named Annie scented a letter that Eddie would never sniff. *☛*

Mark H. Walker is a longtime freelancer in the gaming industry. He is currently wrapping up The Tribe, a military science-fiction novel.

I squeezed a **SHORT BURST**, then another, avoiding the temptation to mash the firing button for too long.

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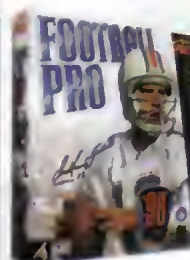
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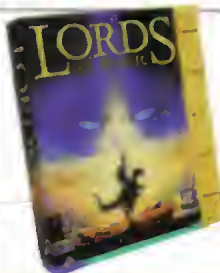
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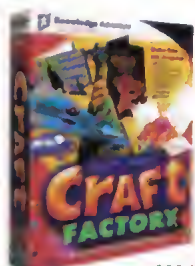


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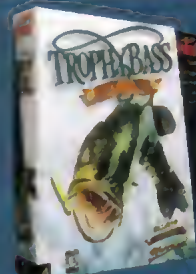
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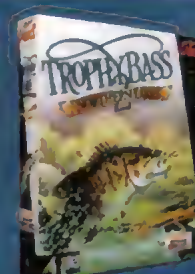
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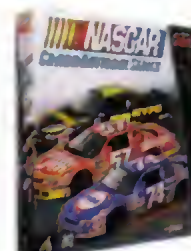
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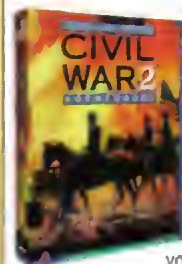


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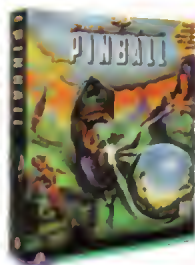


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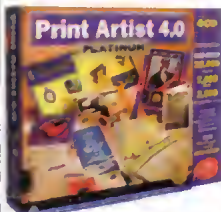
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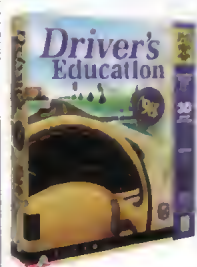


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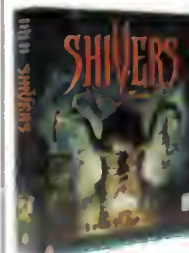


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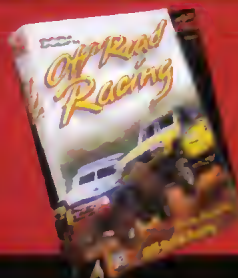
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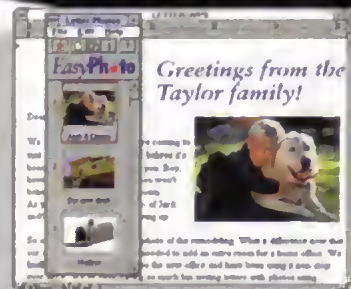
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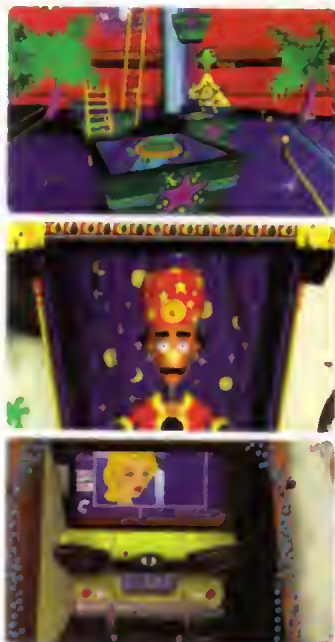
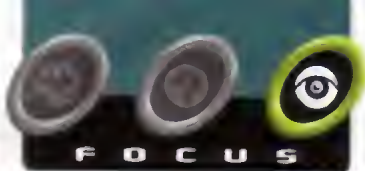
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**CHIPS,
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AND**



BLACKJACK

Where to go when you've got that
burning itch...to gamble, that is

By Rob Bakie

Gird yourself in your finest white polyester, put on the gaudiest gold chains you have, daub yourself with that last-minute Rogaine-and-Old-Spice cocktail—it's time to enter the world of Leisure Suit Larry once more. But this time, Al Lowe's latest diversion starring that lovable, balding lothario isn't your standard point 'n' grope adventure, it's the misbegotten love child of *Hayle Casino* and *Leisure Suit Larry*. Prepare yourself, you've entered *Leisure Suit Larry's Casino*.

The sights that greet you in this brave new neon world will be one part familiar, two parts unknown, and all parts funny. The usual suspects of casinohood are rounded up here: blackjack,

poker, craps, slots, and roulette, plus quite a few new twists on the genre in inimitable Larry style. Lowe has gone out of his way to give you the full casino experience, too, with plenty of restaurants, lounges, and even a gift shop to spend those hard-won Larrybucks.

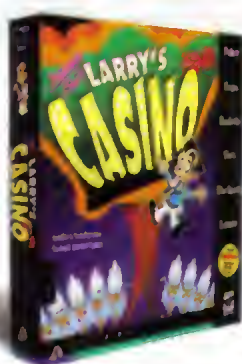
Bad taste, online and off

You're thinking, "Hey, this place sounds great! Can I bring my friends?" The answer is a great big leisure-suit-clad "Yes!" The game is internet-ready; in fact, some of the

funnest parts of the game only work online. All the casino games (poker, blackjack, slots, craps, and roulette) work online or off, but all the party games (Say What?!, Pickup Master, and the Comedy Clubs) as well as the chat areas (restaurants, bars, and the Quiki-Wed Chapel) only work online. But we're getting ahead of ourselves. Let's take the tour and all will become clear.

Hotel rooms play a prominent part in the Larry games, so it comes as no surprise that that's where you start in *Leisure Suit Larry's Casino*. Your first hotel room's no palatial suite—the only "niceties" are the CYBERLARRY 2000™ in the corner that spits out bad jokes like some demented fortune teller, and the CYBERSHOP

**Larry Drives
Me Crazy!**



www.sierra.com/lscasino

Leisure Suit Larry's Casino

Developer	Sierra
Format	WIN95 CD
Rating	Rating Pending
Price	\$44.95
Order #	70425
Phone	1.800.757.7707

2000™ in the closet that dispenses personas like some insane plastic surgeon. Choose a persona from the CYBERSHOP 2000™, slap it on, and test a few emoticons in the mirror. (Your on-screen persona's facial expression will change based on the emoticons you type into your chat.) Now you're ready to gamble away the kids' virtual college money.



FROM BEDPAN TO BALCONY: Cockroaches are your roommates in the beginning, but win enough money and Annette Boning may join you upstairs in your penthouse for more fun.



Please come inside

At the front desk you'll meet the man himself, Larry Laffer. Apparently his casino's a bit understaffed, so when you're offline you'll see a lot of him. (Online, you'll only bump into him at the front desk and in the gift shop.) Don't like the condemned room you're staying in? Go online to upgrade. The price is a bit steep: \$10,000 to get a nicer room. Checking your pockets, you find you only have \$5,000 Larrybucks. There's no time to stand around, you've got some loot to win!

There are several ways to win money in *Larry's Casino*. The most obvious is to play one of the standard casino games. Except, of course, that there's not much that's "standard" in *Larry's Casino*. The Larry team

used the *Hoyle Casino* engine as a starting point, so the rules and payouts for the games are accurate, but Larry's Casino being rather unconventional and...um... Larryesque, most of the gambling is done from the comfort of hot tubs (let's hear it for waterproof cards!).

Right off the main lobby you'll find the slot machines. There are three different slot machines to play: *Babes in Space* (a possible reference to *Leisure Suit Larry 8?*), *The Coconut Monkey*, and *XXX Bowling* (Al swears the triple-X refers to getting a perfect 10th frame!). They range in price from a quarter to five dollars.

After that you may want to try your hand at something a little harder and more group-oriented. Just jump in the hot tub and strap yourself in for a Texas Hold 'Em tournament. Of course that's just

one of five poker variants you can play.

If poker's not your speed, you can jump tubs and play blackjack. Like all the games, blackjack is highly configurable, and you can set it up to play with specific casino rules (only you can decide if you're a Las Vegas Strip person or a Downtown Vegas devotee).

The rocket scientists among you will delight in figuring out the precise odds on the craps table and at the roulette wheel. To each his own. The rest of us will just put the shiny disks on the table and watch them get taken away.

Next you might want to check out the gift shop. Larry is your clerk and if you give him the chance he'll extol the virtues of your various purchase options. Here you can spend your winnings on everything from unisex silk



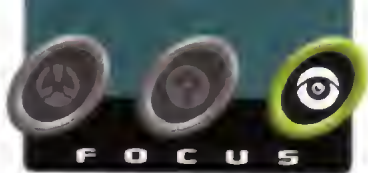
SAME FACE DIFFERENT PLACE

In every previous *Leisure Suit Larry* game, you were always Larry. But not in *Casino*. Here, offline, you play against a wacky collection of characters made famous in previous *Leisure Suit Larry* adventure games. But what about on-line? Everyone knows people on-line often masquerade as someone they're not. So I thought, "Let's let you be one of these personae!" In online *Casino*, you can be a woman (Dr. W. Baringmore, Cavarice, Vuurnet, Annette Boning, Captain Thygh, Wydoncha Jugg o' Peggy) or a man (Wang, Dick, Jo nimon, or Peter). If you know *Love for Sail!*, you know that's a wide variety of personae!"

—AL LOWE



DOES THIS FLOAT YOUR BOAT?: The rules and payouts of the games are accurate but most of the gambling takes place in hot tubs.



PLAY ONLINE WITH OTHER HIP SWINGERS, OR BY YOURSELF... ALONE... WITH NOBODY.

boxers to canned ham (figuring out why you would want to buy canned ham in a casino is the real trick). This might be just the place to pick up a little gift for that cyberfriend you can't bring home to mother.

Online laugh track

After you've lost your shirt with the normal casino games (or blown your dough on canned ham), it's time to earn some more bucks. Unlike other gambling simulations, you can't just restart to get more money; in *Larry's Casino* you have to earn it. There are four group online-only games (called "party games") that give you the chance to buy back your shirt and gamble again.

The first of these party games is called Pickup Master. The object of Pickup Master is to make up funny pickup lines from a topic selected by the group. Everyone gets a chance to make up a line and then the group votes on their favorites.

If you get a vote, you get Larrybucks. What could be easier than that? The next party game is Say What?! Say What?! Is similar to Pickup Master, but you make up definitions for

words instead of pickup lines. Again, a vote gives you the chance to get back to the gambling tables. Finally, a game that rewards wit as much as skill!

And lastly there are two comedy clubs, the Clean Comedy Club and the Funny Comedy Club. Now's your chance to earn some money for being the class clown. In fact, if the comedy club is your forte, you may never want or need to look at a slot machine again.

All of the games provide opportunity for socializing (unlike your parents' basement),

but there may be times when you're tired of playing games and you just need somewhere to cool your jets and tip back a few. Lucky for you, there are plenty of restaurants and bars in *Larry's Casino*. If greasy spoon is your taste there's the Food Trough, but if you favor something a little more trendy, Planet Larry might suit your palate. If you're packing an expense-account credit card, why not go all the way: to Molto Dinner-o, the penthouse restaurant with the penthouse prices. (What do you care? It's only virtual calories!)

What if you're not hungry, just thirsty? Enjoy as many virtual drinks as you can afford in three bars, with three price ranges. Shooters is a friendly place to chat while playing virtual



DON'T I KNOW YOU FROM SOMEWHERE: People from *Leisure Suit Larry* games past make cameo appearances to compete against you and try to take your hard-earned cash.

pool. Le Trapeze Bar has that circus-circus feel, while The Cock and Bull is for the snob in all of us.

After all that socializing, when you've met that special someone—when you've exchanged canned ham and shared a pair of silk unisex boxer shorts—there's the Quiki-Wed Chapel (complete with Larry as Elvis Impersonator/ Priest) to tie that cyber knot. Finally, the two of you can retire to your newly upgraded hotel room (assuming you were a winner at gambling as well) and plan just how much fun you're going to have the next day.

Leisure Suit Larry's Casino: old favorites, new favorites, and more fun than you can shake a hair plug at. A world of online fun and interaction seamlessly mingled within an authentic gambling simulation. You may never leave your house again. **A**

Rob Bokie is better known as the "Lord of the Dance."



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SGA Spring Classic

COURSE: Coeur d'Alene

Weekly Moderated Events

June

SGA June Sponsored Tournament

COURSE: Black Diamond Ranch

Weekly Moderated Events

July

SGA July Sponsored Event

COURSE: Royal Birkdale - Site of the
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August

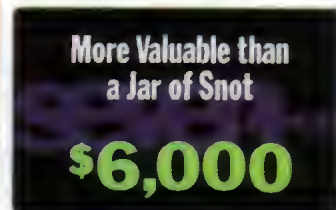
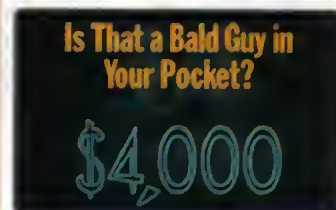
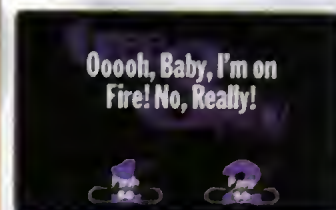
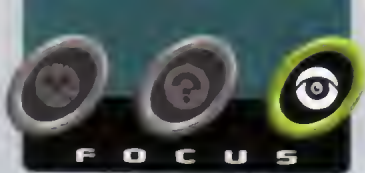
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Weekly Moderated Events





As a public service, we uncaged our in-house JACK ASS and requested some words of guidance on the JACK universe. "JACK this!" were his first words....

By Paul Quinn

AH, ABUSE. FOR SOME reason we are thriving on it in the '90s. Personally, I think it's a backlash against the Politically Correct '80s, when you couldn't order a strawberry frappe without some overzealous labor fanatic throwing a jar of Smucker's at you to protest the plight of child labor strawberry pickers in rural America. That is why *YOU DON'T KNOW JACK*, the Dennis Miller of trivia games (Motto: Sit down, shut up, and *play*), is so popular. OK, fine, it also has a lot to do

with the excellent writing, the talented host, the flawless delivery, production values, playability, innovation, and the bald guy on the box. Plus it's just so damned funny. I firmly believe that what gives the *JACK* series the edge over any other trivia game is just that—its edge. More attitude than Howard Stern on a tequila bender. Tell it like it is and don't hold back because in the end it don't mean *JACK*.

We have come for your cranium

It all started with the original *YOU DON'T KNOW JACK* and has grown like that gray thing in the back of your fridge into the trivia game from hell that's more addicting than those caramel Girl Scout cookies with the chocolate stripes. Now we have a veritable cornucopia of *JACK* installments, from the original to *Huge* (three



The "show" is what makes *JACK* better than 99% of the programming you see on the 6,983 cable channels you have.



www.sierra.com/trivia

YOU DON'T KNOW JACK HUGE

Developer	Jellyvision
Format	WIN/Mac CD
Rating	Teens
Price	\$39.95
Order #	20217
Phone	1.800.757.7707

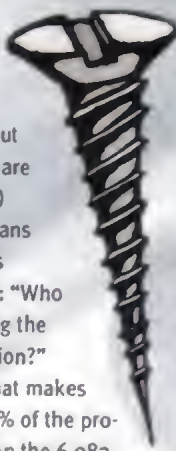
games in one: the first *JACK*, Vol. 2, and Vol. 3), *Movies* ("Frankly my dear, you don't know *JACK*"), *TV*, *Sports*, and who knows what else is coming down the pipe. There's probably a bunch of people at Jellyvision (co-developers, with Berkeley Systems, of *JACK*) right now sitting in a room filled with smoke, seven kinds of party snacks, and a washtub of Milk Duds saying things like, "How about *YOU DON'T KNOW JACK: Bodily Functions!*" or "*YOU DON'T KNOW JACK: Automotive Repair!*" (And if any of you yahoos at JV use these, I get 10%, see?)

The point is that no matter what your background, education, or cerebral condition there is a *JACK* trivia show for you. And it is a show. Without the game-show

aspect, *JACK* would just be an on-screen version of Trivial Pursuit without the divots (no, they are NOT called wedges!) and without the groans when someone wins with a question like: "Who was president during the Reagan Administration?"

The "show" is what makes *JACK* better than 99% of the programming you see on the 6,983 cable channels you have access to. The hosts don't give a wet slap about tact, either. More that once I sat with mouth agape, laughing hysterically at Cookie the host (I did not make that up although it does sound like a spokesman for breakfast cereal) after he made

some comment on my lack of a life because I was playing a computer game on a Saturday night. It was like he was watching me and knew that it was the weekend and I was sitting in my living room playing *JACK* in my underwear and he flipped me a bunch of



Screw Your Neighbor!

attitude. "Well," I replied rather glibly, I thought, "At least I'm at home having fun while *you* have to work hosting a trivia show! Hahahaha!"

These are party games as Cookie or Nate or whoever is hosting will point out if you are playing by yourself. "Didn't you read the box? Get some friends!" is what he said to me. This is major party fodder for the computer-inclined. Refreshing adult beverages are completely optional and may either enhance or detract from the experience, depending on your personality and/or tolerance.

This ain't no frag fest

This is not your usual blast-'em-into-giblets frag fest either, popular at many "computer" parties. This is not your typical party fodder, period. This is a mental challenge! Sure, those guys with the bloodshot eyes and twitching "mouse" hands can put a rocket up your backside in 2 seconds flat (we are talking *Quake* here, it's a computer game, so get that thought *right* out of your head), but do they know what famous (deceased) person's private parts were auctioned off recently? Can

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Say Oral Roberts' televangelical show were also named for a number. If it's the donation amount he asked for so God wouldn't "call him back to heaven," what would his show be called?

1. "The Two-Bit Club"
2. "The 700 Thousand Club"
3. "The Eight Million Club"
4. "The 40 Billion Club"

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Oral Exam \$2,000

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1. "The Two-Bit Club"
2. "The 700 Thousand Club"
3. "The Eight Million Club"
4. "The 40 Billion Club"

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LOU GOT SCREWED: Screw your neighbor when you hit a hard question—then they have to answer it. But if they know it, you're in trouble!

THIRD TIME'S A CHARM: *JACK* Volume 3 continues with the insanely bizarre trivia of the *JACK* series—but on a whole new level of insanity.

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2. Does it Glow in the Dark?
3. Would it Still Be Considered Necrophilia?

8 \$2,000

Is That You, or Are You Just Happy To See Me?

It's Friday night, and you're in a "Congo snake" singles bar. Which statement are you most likely to overhear?

1. "Let's go to the restroom to fix my mascara."
2. "Let's go to the restroom to fix my mascara."
3. "Look at the legs on that babe!"
4. "It's cold out, but if I look at you I get hot!"

Push \$2,000 \$2,000

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Obviously a **stand-out feature** of any trivia game is the **difficulty of the questions**. It's here that **YDKJ** really comes to the fore, as the **questions are, um, truly bizarre**. -Hotgames.com

Strange High-School Orchestra Takes

A fiddle nerd sold pee

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You say it if you know someone's secret...
...and they want to know how you know.
A small hint to your course.

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What's on the box?

FROSTED FLAKES

1 mammal	2 not mammal	3 skip
-------------	-----------------	-----------

\$1000

Howard \$55,000

SIZE DOES MATTER: JACK Huge gives you more than 2,400 questions—if you've been looking for a way into the JACK world, Huge is it!

they hear the answer without snerking Mountain Dew through their nose? Probably. They won't get the "Bonaparte" pun either.

(Note: If you understood the last few sentences, you either have played JACK a lot or could use a Prozac the size of an eggplant.)

The point here, if there is a point at all besides a golden opportunity for me to cut loose with a stream-of-consciousness dissertation on the best game-show series since the beginning of time (and make asides for the

sheer joy of it), is that it is all about fun. No whining, no apologies, and no restraints, plus irreverent humor that would make SCTV proud.

Even **YOU DON'T KNOW JACK** the netshow, which you can play for free on the Internet, makes no apologies when it interrupts the show for commercials (in this case, real commercials for actual products paid for by existing companies). The host tells you to suck it up and watch because this is how the show gets paid for. You don't get that on *Jeopardy*. You can't imagine

with you in it, don't they?"

Yes, I think this generation is tired of being coddled. We are burned out on people telling us what is correct and what is funny and what we should say so as not to offend any carbon-based life form that has ever existed, right down to the original amoeba. If we really wanted our lives and interactions to be nice and safe, we never would have gone to college out of state. That is why the JACK series is one of the greatest entertainment achievements of the '90s.

Come join in our reindeer games! Try **JACK the netshow** for free (www.bezerk.com). You'll be hooked. After you haul yourself off the floor and pick the carpet lint out of your hair, grab a fistful of rent money and race to your local software outlet. And if you think for a minute I overstated anything in this article....

YOU DON'T KNOW JACK!!!

Alex Trebek telling you to watch the commercials and shut up. When you look at AI all you can think is, "They starch that suit

When Poul Quinn Isn't writing for InterAction, he can be found in sleazy pubs, and banging his head on the floor in wonderment

THE INTERACTION TOP FIVE

We took an informal poll here at InterAction, and these were our favorite JACK categories:

Stereotyping Isn't Just Easy, It's Fun

When I Say Blow, You Ask How Hard

Great Party, But the Wieners Are Scorched

The Question Is Licking Itself

Harpo Is Oprah Spelled Backwards

The package looked hot.
The descriptions were glowing.
The screen shots sizzled.

And my fifty went up in smoke.



Choosing a game by the packaging is always risky. They all look good. That's why you need to go to GameSpot. There you can download the latest demos so you can try before you buy, read in-depth reviews by top editors and gamers, get hints and tips to play better and much more. And, it's all free. So before you buy another game, go to GameSpot... because you've got better things to burn than your money.


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ROW vs. WADE

There's never an off-season when the fishin' hole is just a click away

By Paul Quinn

FISHING ON YOUR PC. Fishing on your PC? Who the heck came up with this idea?

OK, I admit that was my initial reaction to *Trophy Bass* a couple of years ago. At the time I was in the trenches of Sierra Tech Support, a highly efficient, well-oiled, slightly cynical operation, and we were asked by the developers to test the beta version of *Trophy Bass*. My supervisor asked me if I wanted to test our new fishing game and after I wiped tears of laughter from my face and said, "No, what is it really about?" a couple of dozen times I found myself with a copy of Sierra's newest addition to its

sports line. I loaded it up, all the while wondering what they're dispensing from the Dynamix vending machines. Ten minutes later I found myself yelling "WOO-HOO!" when I hooked a big flopper.

What is this all about? One minute I'm saying "Get a life!" and the next I'm fretting about which lure to use and whether it's ethical to use the Spray On Lure in a tournament.

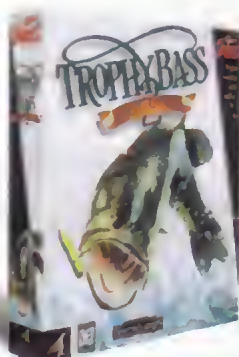
I immediately checked under my desk for a pod.

Bass-kicking fun

Why do people love to fish on a computer? And they do, too. *Trophy Bass* and *Trophy Bass 2* are huge, having sold more copies than the Beatles and Elvis combined. With add-on packs such as *Northern Lakes* and the latest silicon hip wader, *Trophy Rivers*, the numbers keep growing (half a million happy anglers at last count). Why is this so popular? For myself, it's a number of factors that turned me from hardened cynic to Cyber Bass Master. The game itself of

"There's a fine line between fishing and just **STANDING ON THE SHORE LIKE AN IDIOT.**"

— STEVEN WRIGHT



www.sierra.com/tb2

Trophy Bass 2 Deluxe

Developer	Dynamix
Format	WIN CD
Rating	Kids to Adults
Price	\$29.95
Order #	70320
Phone	1.800.757.7707



HOOK 'EM DANO: Stalk your quarry and wade into casting position, or use a drift boat in Trophy Rivers.

course is very well done, with the realism and fun of bass fishing well-represented. The game is also very quiet. In these times when *Quake* and *Diablo* rule the after-work office games, it's very nice to just sit and fish. Ahhhhh! Simpler times. No planes, no monsters, no grenade launchers (although that would be a hoot: "There's a big one —BOOM!— I think that's our limit!").

But that's just one person's opinion. I wanted to find out from the real source, the people out there—right behind you, actually—who are playing *Trophy Bass* every day. Here is what they had to say:

Me: "Excuse me, why do you enjoy fishing on your computer?"

Them: "Shhh! You'll score the fish oway."

So you see, people are really into these games. That's

nothing compared to the people playing *Trophy Bass* online, though. That's where the action, so to speak, is. Every day hundreds of people gather via modem or World Opponent Network to fish together, chat, and hold tournaments. There

are several Fishing Associations online, some boasting more than 300 members, that hold their own meetings and tournaments, give away prizes, and do all the other things that non-cyber associations do—except that the online groups have members from all over the planet who meet nightly at several different lakes to fish together. In the physical world that would mean a LOT of Frequent Flyer miles and honey-roasted-peanut overdose. With PC fishing the lake is just a click away.

Here are some excerpts from actual people who actually play every night and who are not paid by the word for their opinions:

"Christmas of 1996 my son knew I was going crazy not being able to fish, as I am on ovid fisherman, both freshwater and

saltwater. Living in New Jersey makes fishing quite a seasonal event....He decided to look for a game that I could play and come across Sierra's Trophy Bass 2.... I was shocked at the realism of the game. I was up until the wee hours of the night fishing....The game is as close to real-life fishing as you could get without being on the water....Not only was I able to fish online, but I was able to chat with other fishing people from around the world about all types of places I've heard of but never fished....Some I have met in person and gone fishing (for real) with. I've even been invited to go fishing with some of my new friends in the states where they live....I'm hooked!" —SMOKENS

"I think fishing online opens that extra door to anglers everywhere. If the weather is not good to go fishing for real or if you just don't feel like going out fishing then I'd suggest you....crank up that Trophy Bass 2 CD. I think not only is Trophy Bass 2 a fun place but is a game of skill and technique. It gives you a feeling of real competition and gives everyone a challenge no matter if you are a newbie or an old-timer like me."

—BASS BANDIT

LINEUP

Trophy Rivers



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Order #70060

www.sierra.com/rivers

Trophy Bass 2 Deluxe



WIN CD
Kids to Adults
\$29.95
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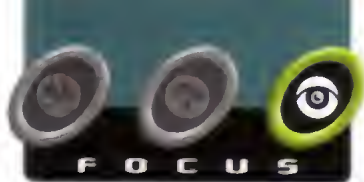
www.sierra.com/tb2

Order

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NEVER AN OFF-SEASON: With 20-plus lakes and rivers, and more than 25 species of fish, Trophy Rivers will keep you fishing year 'round.



"If people concentrated on the really important things in life
THERE'D BE A SHORTAGE OF FISHING POLES."

— DOUG LARSON

"Con't really put my finger on why this game but it hos me hooked (ha ho) so bod but I have been on since doy one ond love it. I love the fishing ond the Northern Lakes Add-On is really great....When I go out of town on business I really hove with-drowls. It is fun to meet all the new people...ond now it is just like on extended family."

—LADY GIZIT

FISHING TALES


What is fishing without a few stories? Well, I could regale you with the time I fought for three hours to bring in a particularly pesky piscine, but it turned out to be a Mac Classic (them's good eatin' but you gotta cook 'em awhile). However, that yarn pales in comparison to the tales of HawgMaster. His adventures are chronicled in *Fishing With Hawg* at <http://members.tripod.com/~hawgmaster/>. Anyone who can sit there with a straight face and tell me he caught a 3 lb. black bass using his wife's makeup kit (I assume it was his wife's) has my "beer can and a shoelace" story beat hands down.

Good times and good friends

The two things that did come up again and again in the quest to find out why PC fishing is so popular are the realism and the community. A good chunk of the *Trophy Boss* following seem to be people who thoroughly enjoy real-life fishing and who use the virtual version when it is not convenient to go to the lakes, like on their lunch break or after Letterman. They also enjoy the camaraderie of getting together with folks who share a common interest in fishing. If they could, they'd be on the actual lakes with these people all the time,

but since we all need to pay the bills and feed the kids and clean the litter box, PC fishing is a decent substitute. You also don't have to worry about who was supposed to bring the beer or forgetting to set the parking brake and watching your \$30,000 SUV slowly slip beneath the surface of Lake Mead while Celine Dion sings in the background.

Fishing online is a wonderful way to indulge in a great relaxing pastime either by yourself or with new friends, and you don't get your socks wet. You can get started right now with *Trophy*

Bass, the game that started it all. Then move on to *Trophy Bass 2*, *Trophy Rivers*, the *Northern Lakes Add-On Pack*, or splurge for *Trophy Boss Deluxe* (a combination of *Trophy Boss 2* and *Northern Lakes*). No doubt this phenomenon will continue to grow with new versions and add-ons. Now that *Trophy Boss* has covered rivers and lakes, what's left? It must be time to head out to sea. Keep your tackle dry. 

Poul Quinn spends a lot of his time on his soilboot writing, trolling for bottom dwellers, and pulling on his boom vang.



BETTER GRIP YOUR JOYSTICK TIGHTER: When that northern pike or Atlantic salmon takes the lure, and your Force-Feedback Joystick leaps from your hands, you know you're in for a fight.



SAVE 25% ON SIERRA'S TROPHY FISHING BUNDLE

Take advantage of this special InterAction Magazine offer and we'll give you *Trophy Bass 2 Deluxe* and *Trophy Rivers* together in one *Trophy Fishing Bundle* for just \$44.95.

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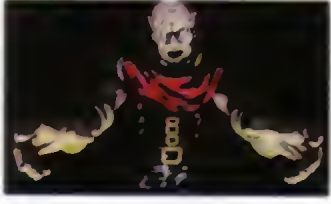
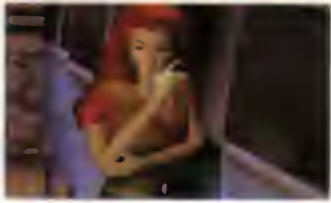
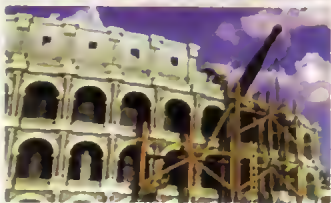
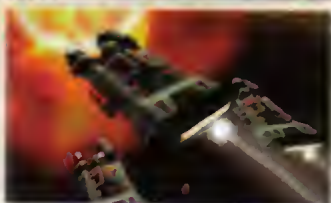
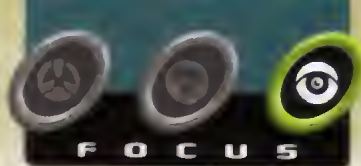
(Postage-Paid, natch.)

Get The Stuff.

(Really Good Stuff.)

Risk Zip.

(Grin.)



Sierra Studios

The Birth of a Brand

Sierra Studios is the newest division within the Sierra family, but the games that carry the Sierra Studios banner are anything but rookies. All of them build on the company's 20-year-old tradition as the leader in the computer-game industry. In fact, four of the games are continuations of ground-breaking, well-received series: King's Quest: Mask of Eternity, Gabriel Knight III: Blood of the Sacred, Blood of the Damned, Return to Krondor, and Caesar III. (We are particularly pleased to be continuing the Krondor series, and to be working with co-developer Pyrotechnix and award-winning author Raymond E. Feist.) While this quartet will introduce new wrinkles in their respective categories, a fifth game, Homeworld, we modestly hope will represent an evolutionary step forward in gaming.

On this and the following five pages, we invite you to read more about the first offerings from Sierra Studios.

—EDITOR

King's Quest: Mask of Eternity

The Woman Behind the Mask

A Q&A with pioneer game designer Roberta Williams
Conducted by Eric Twelker

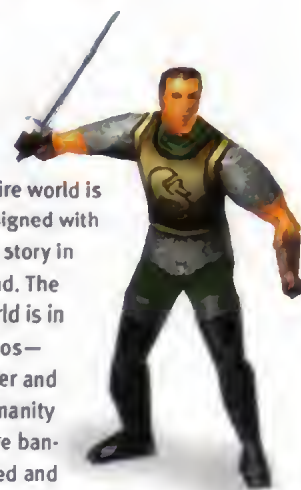
Eric Twelker: What were your goals when setting out to create *Mask of Eternity*?
Roberta Williams: My goals are always the same: to make the player feel like they're in the game, so much so that they forget the real world around them. Playing two-dimensional adventure games, I always wanted to have the ability to see what's behind the backgrounds, peek under a table or on top of a roof,

and explore every corner. In *Mask of Eternity*'s three-dimensional world, you're no longer limited to the flat picture on the screen.

ET: *Mask* departs from the traditional 2D adventure game by using a 3D game engine most commonly employed in first-person action games. How is *Mask*'s story conveyed using this technique?

RW: In *Mask of Eternity*, the

entire world is designed with the story in mind. The world is in chaos—order and humanity were banished and you must restore it.



The player learns about the world and furthers the plot by exploring locations, finding and using inventory items, and interacting with other characters. And unlike a first-person combat game, even fighting the various creatures you'll meet is part of the story. By doing so, the player will discover who these creatures are and why they've emerged into the world.

ET: What is the theme of *Mask of Eternity* and what does the Mask itself represent?

RW: *Mask of Eternity* is about spirituality—what it means now and through the ages and where people have searched for it. As you go through the game, you sense that Connor is looking for his own meaning, and you'll discover the game's main themes: truth, light, and order.

The Mask itself stands for the all-powerful being, the Creator. The Mask is sun-like; in many religions, the sun represents God. In most religions, like the sun itself, you never can look directly at the Creator unless you become Immortal. There are certain places in the game's quest—obstacles, puzzles, interactions with guard-

ians that you meet—where the player is trying to accomplish that feat. It's all integrated into the story in such a way that people who know what to look for will understand the overall quest.

ET: What can you reveal about *Mask of Eternity's* story?

RW: In the opening scene, we see a fantastic world off in the celestial realm. A white-robed, priest-like character approaches a gold Mask set atop an altar. He transforms into a dark being as lightning crashes down on the altar, exploding the Mask. The pieces hail down to the world below. In Daventry, King Graham's magic mirror begins swirling and displays the bad omen of the Mask breaking apart.

We then meet Connor. A piece of the Mask sails down from the sky and lands at his feet. Just as he picks up the piece, a storm swirls overhead, the sky turns dark, and everyone turns into stone...except for Connor, who is somehow protected by the piece of the Mask. The player will soon discover that it's up to him to restore order to the world. Eventually, Connor must face the dark being himself and attempt to banish him from the celestial world.

ET: Tell us about the puzzle elements in the game.


RW: The puzzles are based around Connor's experiences and actions. Some puzzles involve finding and using inventory items to get around an obstacle. For instance,



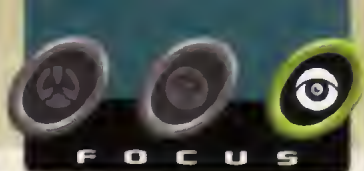
HACK AND SLASH? You'll have a sword for close-in fighting and a cross-bow for long-range attacks, but it's the quest for truth that matters.



IN THE THICK OF IT: The destruction of the Mask plunges the world into chaos. It'll be up to you to restore order...if you can survive.

in one part of the game, Connor must find a way to cross the River of Death. To succeed, he needs to find a way to activate a lever on a drawbridge on the other side of the river. In another part of the game, Connor must figure out how to enter the sanctum of the Lord of the Dead. To do so, Connor must cross tiles, each bearing a symbol, in the right order. But first, he must search for clues that will decipher the correct order of jumping across the tiles for getting across. 





Homeworld

A Galaxy Not So Far, Far Away

By Arthur Lake

EVERY GAME PUBLISHER IS compelled to push each and every product to be "A revolutionary game that is destined to change the world." In a refreshing twist of events, neither Sierra Studios nor its co-developer, Relic Entertainment, is referring to their first joint project, *Homeworld*, as a title that is going to change the world. Instead, they are calling this an "evolutionary" step in gaming—one that combines elements of our favorite games to create a fresh experience.

CINEMATIC SAVVY: Zoom in on a single ship or zoom out to observe an entire fleet.

From the screen shots included in this article and from our first glance at the game itself, it's clear that this game is a not-too-distant descendant of our favorite space-combat titles, such as *X-Wing* vs. *TIE Fighter* and the games in the *Wing Commander* series.

However, this is not a cockpit-based game. Enjoy the view in third-person perspective as the highly detailed 3D ships traverse the outer reaches of the galaxy, leaving mesmerizing engine trails in their path. Each craft offers a unique and deadly offering to the player—and that's where the strategic element of play begins.

Like *X-Wing* vs. *TIE Fighter*, your success in *Homeworld* will be largely dependent upon your ability to choose the right craft for the right job. If you make the wrong call, be prepared to watch your precious ship burst into a pyromaniac's delight of virtual flames.

Breaking the 2D shackles

Since the game is being played in a true 3D universe, Relic decided to give you complete control of the camera. Zoom in on a single ship or zoom out to see an entire battle, all the while retaining the option to rotate the camera to see the action from any angle imaginable. In addition to the infinite camera control, you can also move ships around in true 3D space, using a simple but powerful interface. This freedom of movement releases the gameplay from the 2D shackles so commonly imposed on space-combat games. Imagine plotting your fleet's course up and over your enemy, unleashing an attack from directly above their unsuspecting little heads. Of course, given the ability to attack and be attacked from any direction, a little paranoia will help you survive—especially in multiplayer games.

Speaking of multiplayer games, *Homeworld* already has room for up to eight players via LAN or the Internet on the World Opponent Network (WON.net). With the help of an easy-to-use tool, you will have the ability to give your ships a customized paint job before they head into the heat of battle. Meanwhile, on the single-player side, *Homeworld's* creators say it is being designed to be a fun and challenging game—but not the type of challenge that so discourages players that they abandon the single-player quest, opting instead to test their prowess in the multiplayer arenas.





The Relic promise

"Lately, developers have lost sight of why they do what they do. The fundamental principle behind our job is fun!" says Alex Garden, CEO of Relic Entertainment. "Relic is committed to bringing some fun back into the industry. Don't expect our games to be psychotically difficult, or unbelievably long, but do expect to have a fantastic time playing them. It is our goal to ensure that no player is ever less than totally satisfied when they buy one of our games."

Another interesting feature within *Homeworld*, and one that is too often overlooked by game designers everywhere, is the use of sound. Often, a game of this sort will feature some nerve-racking music that loops and loops and loops as less than a handful

of voice-response lines are triggered for key events, such as constructing new craft or heading into an attack. But in *Homeworld*, the team is taking a much more ambitious approach to sound. More than 4,000 lines of dialogue have been recorded for this game, giving the player a voice response for significant events while simultaneously advancing the story and interjecting a sense of compassion and humor. All of this dialogue will be heard in 3D stereo at a CD-quality level.

The obligatory tech talk

A preview of any game would be incomplete without some discussion of 3D graphics. In *Homeworld's* case this discussion is short: The goal is to support as many cards as humanly possible. Currently, *Homeworld* supports all

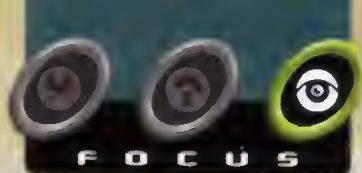
LIGHT YEARS FROM HOME: Highly detailed 3D ships traverse the galaxy, leaving mesmerizing engine trails in their path.

3Dfx chipsets: Voodoo, Voodoo Rush, and Voodoo2, with Direct3D support being seriously considered. However, the game does not require a 3D accelerator and runs quite well in software.

While we're having the required tech talk, it's also worth noting that *Homeworld* runs under Windows 95 as well as Windows NT 4.0, and is cross-compatible—meaning NT players have the ability to square off against their WIN 95 enemies in a galaxy that's not so far, far away. *n*



TRUE 3D: Plot your fleet's course up and over your enemy's unsuspecting little head!



CAESAR III

Details Upon Details

By Cindy Vanous

THERE'S NOTHING LIKE A RICH, detail-oriented environment to turn your basic strategy game into a full-fledged scheming, sweating, conniving, plotting, fearing-for-your-life and cursing-your-enemies'-parentage kind of experience. Without the challenge of well-designed resource management and the very organic quirks of human-like AI...well, you'd might as well buy yourself an ant farm.

Consider the basic goal of *Caesar III*: build a Roman city. How can you go wrong? Just plunk down a few houses, build a couple of farms, maybe some roads, and presto!—Instant city. Watch your little guys walk around, col-



BATTLE ON, BEN-HUR: A coliseum isn't something you throw up to impress the Emperor, it's a vital part of your city's life. It keeps the citizens happy and the revenues flowing.

lect taxes, build the odd amusement or utility for them...right?

Good JUPITER, no! Here's where details come to the rescue,

and turn the ant farm into an exciting, challenging strategy game.

If those little citizens aren't happy enough, they'll pack up their stuff and leave. They need to be fed, employed, entertained, and protected. Not enough houses near the farms? Then you won't have enough workers for the harvest, which means no bread, which means hungry, angry people. Not enough engineers? Expect buildings to collapse. Too few praefectures? Increased crime and possible riots. No gladiator schools or lion tamers? Empty coliseums and unhappy crowds. To top it all off, the Emperor is capricious and greedy, and he has very specific tastes in tithes. If he wants weapons, you'd better

sink a mine, build a foundry, and GET those weapons.

Strategy-gamer heaven

Fans of *Caesar II* might find it difficult to believe that Impressions could improve on their classic fave, but the proof is in the details. All provincial management is now handled within the main city map, the combat system is intuitive and simple, the controls can be hidden to show more of the terrain, and of course the new graphics are wonderful.

But the best new feature of all is the increased interrelation between buildings, industries, and people. For instance, patricians pay higher taxes than plebes. But patricians live in insulae. Which you can't build unless you have pottery. Which your workshops can't produce unless you have a clay mine. Get the idea? Even when your pottery needs are fulfilled, you still may not get patricians, unless you build at least two wine workshops to supply their parties. These are the details that make the latest *Caesar* a chocolate-covered slice of strategy-gamer heaven. **P**



YOU STILL CAN'T BUILD ROME IN A DAY: Your citizens will head for greener pastures if they're not protected and fed. You'll need everything from engineers to build homes to cops to fight crime.

GABRIEL KNIGHT III

Blood of the Sacred, Blood of the Damned

An American Shadow Hunter in France

By Eric Twelker

WHILE RESEARCHING THE location and real-life events behind the setting of her latest mystery in the *Gabriel Knight* series, designer/author Jane Jensen was very aware that graphics and story details would play a crucial role in the game's atmosphere and realism. In *Gabriel Knight III: Blood of the Sacred, Blood of the Damned*, mystery writer Gabriel Knight sets off to Rennes le Chateau, a small village in the Languedoc Valley region of southern France. Here he explores the ties between a number of supernatural events taking place in a noble family's circle.

No one knows what it was, but he became fabulously wealthy. It's spawned a lot of theories by treasure hunters about what his secret was—including speculation about the holy grail."

How to research this tangled web of mystery? For Jensen, a trek to the region itself was the only choice. "It had a great deal of impact on me. As I got close in the car, I started to recognize the names of surrounding towns and features from the map. It was very surreal—a kind of feeling of wonder and stomach-churning excitement. When I finally rounded the bend and realized I was looking at Rennes le Chateau, I had to pull over. The whole experience was surreal."

The goal of the *Gabriel Knight III* team was to provide an outpouring of graphic detail that would make *Gabriel Knight's* world as real as possible to the player. To achieve that goal, the team created "G-Engine" technology, a progressive 3D engine that renders detailed backgrounds and objects with close to photographic realism. Using photos and notes from Jensen's trip and information from books, the team recreated the Languedoc Valley with the new engine. "Because we had to model everything in 3D, and because you are in this one town and valley throughout the game, it has the same architectural sense and mood of the real town," Jensen explains.

This technological advance is combined in *Gabriel Knight III* with Jensen's intricate story and the incredibly detailed setting and environment. *Blood of the Sacred,*

Blood of the Damned will mix the mystique and atmosphere of the real-life setting with the signature esoteric adventure we've come to expect from *Gabriel Knight*. **n**



G-ENGINE KNOW-HOW: This 3D technology creates scenes you could almost walk into. As Jensen explains, the game's setting "has the same architectural sense and mood of the real town"

ROYAL MYSTERY: Even high-born families have their dark secrets.

What is this mystique that actually permeates the region? "The south of France has a fascinating history," explains Jensen. "The Romans mined for gold there, and the Franks and Visigoths, the Cathar religious heresy, and the Knights Templar were all indigenous to the area. Then, around 1900, a poor parish priest uncovered something while restoring the ancient church in a town called Rennes le Chateau.

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Some people will call it a collector's item. The best selling, most realistic stock car sim ever – NASCAR® Racing 2 – and the NASCAR® Grand National® Series Expansion Pack. Together in a special commemorative 50th Anniversary package from Sierra Sports. But to call it a collector's item would be to miss the point. Racing. So peel those stickers. You know you want to.



Travel Agent in a Box

BY DAN RABIN

It was midmorning when we stopped at a scenic overlook

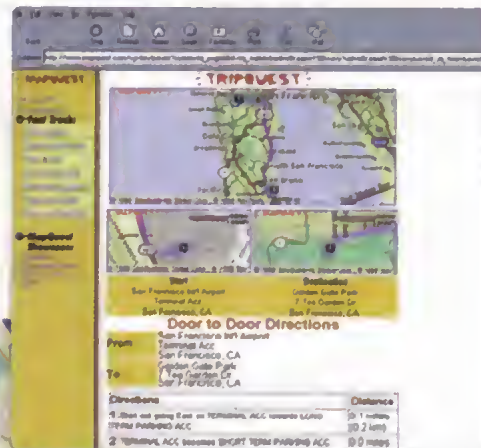
Create custom maps, locate roadside attractions, book bargain airfares, produce door-to-door driving directions, and take advantage of online consumer sites—it's all a snap with USA '98.

to take in the view. It was the first day of our road trip, and since breakfast we had been meandering down Highway 1, along California's central coast, one of the most dramatic and beautiful stretches of highway in the country. Far below us, the Pacific crashed into the rocky headlands, sending huge walls of spray into the air. Behind us, the grassy slopes of the Coast Range—an impossibly deep shade of green this time of year—disappeared into the morning fog that

was just beginning to lift.

Refreshed by the scenery and the mild ocean breeze, we returned to our vehicle to continue our leisurely trek. Before moving on, I looked over one of several custom maps I had created for this weeklong family odyssey. The map displayed the locations of the stops we had planned along our coastal travel route. These destinations

included an assortment of popular attractions, like the Monterey Aquarium and Hearst Castle, along with some restaurants, wineries, and other points of interest.



ONLINE ODYSSEY: Name a place in the US and MapQuest will provide you with a map; name two or more places and TripQuest will provide the driving directions.

USA '98: Don't leave home without it

Creating this custom map, and several others, had been a snap using my new mapping program, *USA '98: Streets & Destinations*. In fact, our entire trip had been conceived, planned, and implemented using the suite of travel tools included in the *USA '98* package.

We began our trip planning by perusing the 1998 *Frommer's USA* travel guide, which is included in the *USA '98* package. After scrutinizing the many enticing road trips described in this useful reference, we decided that the Big Sur driving tour would be a sure cure for our travel bug.

So I started up *USA '98*, and in a few clicks was viewing a map of the California coastline we would soon be exploring. I could almost feel the sand in my toes as I called up *netMarket*, an online, membership-based consumer site

that includes a wide range of travel services and discounts. It's also one of several websites directly accessible from *USA '98*.

I enrolled in *netMarket's* three-month, \$1 trial membership, and was anxious to see if *netMarket's* claims—guaranteed low rates on airfare and rental cars, and hotel discounts up to 50 percent—were for real. Being skeptical by nature, I've always believed that if a deal sounds too good to be true, it probably is. But I figured for a buck I had nothing to lose. As it turned out, the money I saved on this trip alone will cover my annual membership dues for several years. Also, I may never use a travel agent again.

First, I had *netMarket* display the lowest round-trip airfares to San Francisco available on our travel dates. In no time, I had booked our flights and received a \$10 credit for each of the three tickets I had purchased. Next, I reserved a rental car for the week, also at a guaranteed low rate. Since our flight was to arrive in the evening, I switched back to

USA '98 to view a map of all the hotels close to the airport that offered discounts. I selected our first night's lodgings and made reservations. This was easy since *USA '98* can, with a click, display the hotels' phone numbers.

Follow the quests

Then it was off to *MapQuest*, another of *USA '98's* integrated online links. It's no surprise that the unique and ingenious *MapQuest* is consistently rated among the top 20 websites. It should also be no surprise that the developers of *MapQuest* are the same folks who developed *USA '98: Streets & Destinations*.

MapQuest's astounding *TripQuest* function produces door-to-door driving directions between any two locations. Using this function, I printed out directions from the airport to our hotel, and from our hotel to the coastal highway. I then returned to *USA '98* and used this information to quickly produce a custom street map highlighting this route.

Finally, I created a custom street map of San Francisco displaying a half-dozen destinations we wanted to visit around the city. We used this map to plan an efficient travel route during a one-day sightseeing blitz. If only the program could have found us some parking spaces!

All too quickly, our much-anticipated journey came and went. The trip was a memorable one, and our travel plans went off without a hitch.

Among the pleasant memories we returned with was our stay in a quaint hilltop retreat, minutes from the beach, where we spent our final few evenings on our trip. Though we are generally not extravagant travelers, at this stop we went first-class, choosing a spacious two-room suite, complete with fireplace and kitchenette. Accommodations like this would normally be beyond our travel budget. But with our half-price discount, how could we resist? *n*

Dan Rabin once taught a software class in Siberia during a 10-year career in software development and education. He's now a freelance writer based in Boulder, Colorado.



STREETS OF SAN FRANCISCO: Create a custom street map displaying all your destinations. A little planning now means more fun later.

FAREWELL TO FULL PRICE

Frommer's USA (\$21.95 at your local bookshop) isn't the only bargain you'll find when you open the *USA '98: Streets & Destinations* box. You'll also receive the *National Value Guide*, with its pages and pages of money-saving coupons. You can save on airfare, car rentals, lodging, admission fees, meals, clothing—almost every situation a traveler is likely to encounter. The *National Value Guide* is lightweight, slips into a jacket pocket, and could save you up to \$6,000. Why travel any other way?



USA '98: Streets & Destinations



www.sierra.com/usa98

Developer	Sierra
Format	WIN95
Rating	Kids to Adults
Price	\$49.95
Order #	69978
Phone	1.800.757.7707

Charting the Generations

BY BETH DEMETRESCU

"Hi, Karen, it's Beth—you have a minute to chat?

I've been wanting to ask you some questions."

"Sure. What kind of questions?"

"Well, let's start with...What year were you born?"

"Oh, those kinds of questions."

Throw away
your 3x5 cards!

Welcome to the
future of genealogy:
Generations Deluxe
provides the format,
lets you personalize
the chart of
your family tree,
and opens the door
to the Internet.

At some point in everyone's life, they turn to their Mom or Dad and ask that well-known question: "Where did I come from?" Although red-cheeked parents usually find some way to satisfy their child's curiosity, few realize how significant a question it is. As we get older, it becomes less a question of how you got out of your Mom's tummy and more of a pondering of who and what made you who you are: "Where did I come from—ancestrally?" Now, thanks to some fantastic advancements in genealogy software, Sierra Home's *Generations Deluxe* can help you find the answer.

Genealogy has come a long way over the years. From original ancestral tracking, which consisted of stories passed from

generation to generation, to *Generations Deluxe*, today's most complete and easy-to-use genealogy software, tracing your roots has become a lot more organized and, frankly, more successful. I recently had a chance to sit down with a computer, a phone, and a copy of *Generations*, and what I found was impressive.

The big easy

First and foremost, *Generations* provides me with two subprograms: **EasyTree** and **EasyChart**. EasyTree is essentially a gigantic card file that helps greatly in keeping important family information in one place. It allows me to store vital statistics as well as more personal individual facts on



QUEST FOR KIN: *Generations* will help you track your family's history, from what questions to ask to which URL to reach.

Generations Deluxe

*"The simplest to use of all these kinds of programs...
The whole package is a nice, solid deal. Look for it."*

— JOHN QUAIN, CBS NEWS

one card. A simple point and click is all it takes to pull up anyone's information card. Moreover, it's the first program to let me effectively view three generations at once.

My favorite part of EasyTree is that it helped me determine what questions needed to be asked about each person: where were they born, who were their parents, when and whom did they marry, what children did they have, etc. For example, having married recently myself, I can't get over how young (19 years and 2 days) my mother was when she got married. She was just a kid. Could I have found this out without *Generations* prompting me to ask? Probably. Would I have heard all the stories about the wedding (who insisted it be in a certain

church, who refused to go if it was, etc.)? Definitely not!

EasyChart works hand in hand with EasyTree. When I had entered all of my known information onto the cards, I could choose to have EasyChart create a descendant or pedigree chart. A descendant chart starts with one source couple and ends with you and your children, while a pedigree chart starts with you and works its way back to your ancestors. Not only are these charts incredibly easy, they are also quite visually appealing (as opposed to *Family Tree Maker*, where the charts are difficult to build and visually limited). I was able to add scanned photos and documents to them, thus making them so much more complete.


Enter the Internet

Now, what do you do when your search for information takes you to someone who has passed away?

This is another place where *Generations* was invaluable to me. The program features the **Internet Detective**, a quick and easy link to the *Generations* website (www.sierra.com/genealogy). They have hints and tips on how to get started, how to interview people, and how to decipher old documents. There are links to the National Genealogical Society and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints tips pages.

Most important of all, there is a link to **Cyndi's List**, the most complete, most helpful genealogy site ever created. The creator of the site, Cyndi Howells, has amassed more than 25,000 Internet links to help you on your quest. More than 28,000! Cyndi's List took me from my home in Seattle, deep into Old Italy (my father's family), and then to the Lowlands of Scotland (my mother's family). So far, my favorite thing it helped me find was an audio file pronouncing our Scottish clan's name in Gaelic (www.scotclans.com/scotclans/html/body_leslie.html).

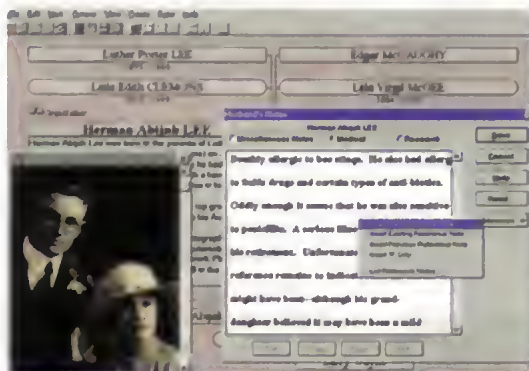
Along with all the links, charts, and general assistance, *Generations* comes with its own historic and Social Security databases, which together give you more than 57 million names. And if that isn't enough for you, you also get your own copy of Cyndi's book: **Netting Your Ancestors — Genealogical Research on the Internet** (see sidebar).

All our lives, we have been told that we are unique, we are individuals. However, we must never forget that we are part of something so much larger — family. And there is no better resource for discovering your family than Sierra's *Generations*. 

Assistant Editor Beth Demetrescu knows exactly where she came from. As for where she's going...

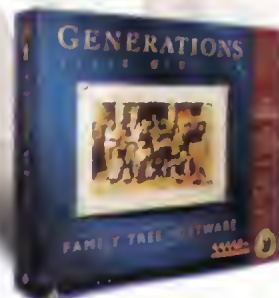
GENEAOLOGY ON THE INTERNET

Genealogical research on the Internet is all about exchanging information with people around the globe, exploring vast databases, and ferreting out obscure factoids lurking at the edges of cyberspace. In **Netting Your Ancestors**, Cyndi Howells walks you through the entire process, from how to get online to how to make the most of e-mail, mailing lists, and newsgroups, and the Web itself. **Netting Your Ancestors**, a \$20 value, is free in every box of *Generations*.



GET YOUR GENEALOGICAL ACT TOGETHER: EasyTree provides the format—you provide the family.

Generations Deluxe



www.sierra.com/genealogy

Developer **Sierra**

Format **WIN95**

Rating **Kids to Adults**

Price **\$49.95**

Order # **69953**

Phone **1.800.757.7707**

A Virtual Green Thumb

BY GEOFFREY KEIGHLEY

Besides being the means to justify a quick lap around the racetrack or a treacherous journey through the dungeon, computers have always had many practical applications in our everyday lives. From the precision of medical software to the reliability of online banking, doing things digitally often seems to be the way to go.

Complete LandDesigner combines four products into one easy-to-use landscape toolbox—whether you're a novice gardener or a green-thumbed pro!

Now, with the release of *Sierra Complete LandDesigner*, the artistry of landscaping has been added to the ways in which a computer can help you save time, avoid costly errors, and prevent design headaches.

So, if you happen to be fighting with a clogged-up ballpoint pen trying to draw an accurate sketch of your landscape, *Complete LandDesigner* is the solution to planning a detailed landscaping project. By employing a toolbox of guides and software wizards that immensely simplify the landscaping process, this software suite never compromises flexibility or quality.

One-stop shop

Complete LandDesigner bundles together four top-selling landscaping products to create a one-stop shop for any landscaper or homeowner: **3D Landscape**, **Photo LandDesigner**, the **Garden Encyclopedia**, and **3D Deck**.

3D Landscape lets you plan your foliage in full 3D, including everything from an interlocking brick driveway to the bed of tulips you always wanted. Whereas **3D Landscape** creates a 3D model of your home, **Photo LandDesigner** can use an actual picture of your house as a foundational backdrop for your dream landscape. Wonder what your house would look like with a redwood tree beside it? Ever thought about digging up the lawn and planting a vegetable garden?

You can easily manipulate scanned or imported photos of your home and landscape with **Photo LandDesigner**. Click and drag images of plants and other objects onto your photo for a realistic view of your yard.

Another addition to the suite is **3D Deck**, which helps design a single or multilevel wood deck—even with a hot tub—and



RESOURCE-RICH: From tulips to tomato plants, bloom seasons to pest infestations, the *Garden Encyclopedia* has the answers.

Sierra Complete LandDesigner

"Easily the best of the programs we saw."

— HOME PC

*"You don't need a green thumb...
All you need is a plot of land
and Garden Encyclopedia."*

— WINDOWS MAGAZINE

generates a cut list and layout diagrams for wood to aid in the actual construction process.

The final element of the product is the **Garden Encyclopedia**, the perfect complement to the design side of the software. This expansive resource features color photos, information on the bloom seasons and sun requirements of thousands of plants, as well as each plant's common and botanical name. From tulips to roses to marigolds or even tomato plants, you'll learn how to prevent pest infestations and take care of the garden you designed.

face includes a number of helpful "design wizards" that walk you through the more complicated processes, such as plotting out garden beds or installing a full irrigation system with sprinkler heads and piping. The included **Multimedia Design Guide** also helps users think about important issues such as using large trees to shade your home and testing the pH balance of soil to determine which plants are best-suited for certain soil types.

The *Complete LandDesigner* suite excels in being easy to use yet very in-depth, permitting you

to tweak items, including the slope height of the yard,



PHOTO FILL IN:
Try out everything from vegetables to redwoods against a scanned photo of your home.


Productivity software is only as good as its interface, and *Complete LandDesigner* is built from the ground up with the end user in mind. Filled to the brim with multimedia tutorials and video clips, the icon-driven inter-

the type of soil, the climate, and even smaller touches such as adding a Canada goose on the front lawn or a basketball net on the driveway. With over 3,500 different variations of flowers, trees, shrubs, ground covers, and other

objects to drag-and-drop into the landscape, the product is extremely versatile. For instance, you can pick the stone material for your driveway, or even the color of the feathered parrot tulips you want to plant in the backyard. Best of all, the ability to change the landscape with a few clicks of the mouse avoids costly errors down the road.

Once you're happy with the design of your sanctuary, *3D Landscape* can switch into the exclusive photo-realistic **3D-Walkabout** module, which previews the landscape in first-person 3D, from any angle or elevation. If you want to peer into the future and see how the landscape will mature over time, the software has the ability to magically grow the landscape up to 99 years into the future. In addition, you can move through all four seasons of the year as the software dynamically blooms flowers in the spring and illustrates barren tree trunks in the winter.

Save time and toll

Once you pick the perfect plants, the most vibrant perennials, and the stone pathway of your choice, the software can generate a shopping list with a budget to aid in moving your design from concept to execution. Together, these four programs form a comprehensive and easy-to-use package—the ultimate landscape planner. In the end, *Complete LandDesigner* helps you save time and toll, whether you are a novice gardener or a green-thumbed pro. 

Geoff Keighley suggests you water your copy of Complete LandDesigner twice a week and make sure it receives at least four hours of sun a day.



WHY STRUGGLE WITH BALLPOINTS?
Plan everything from the ground up with 3D Landscape's point-and-click interface.

Sierra Complete LandDesigner



www.sierra.com/home

Developer	Sierra
Format	WIN95
Rating	Kids to Adults
Price	\$49.95
Order #	69988
Phone	1.800.757.7707



Factory *Full of Fun*

BY DAN RABIN

"Airplanes," I said hopefully. "Masks," replied my 5-year-old, clicking a small mask icon on the screen in front of her.

Craft Factory's versatility keeps older kids challenged, while its talking interface keeps younger kids involved. You're never too young for art!

"Masks," said a little voice inside the computer as the icon smiled and did a short dance. So began the first of many projects with *Print Artist Craft Factory*. A few minutes later, with our mask project successfully completed, we debated the nature of our next creation.

"Airplanes," I said from behind my Frankenstein mask.

"Puppets," my daughter replied from behind her clown mask.

"Puppets," said a little voice inside the computer.

Bringing crafts home to kids

Conversations like this have become frequent since *Print Artist Craft Factory* transformed our home computer into a workshop of banners and bookmarks, masks and mobiles, puppets and posters, schedules and stickers.

Print Artist Craft Factory is the delightful collaboration of Knowledge Adventure, the number-one publisher of educational software for kids, and *Print Artist*, the powerhouse home-publishing program from Sierra.

When it comes to kids' software, attention spans vary with a child's age, mood, and skill level. *Craft Factory* was thoughtfully designed to appeal to children as young as five, yet is cool enough to keep teens interested.

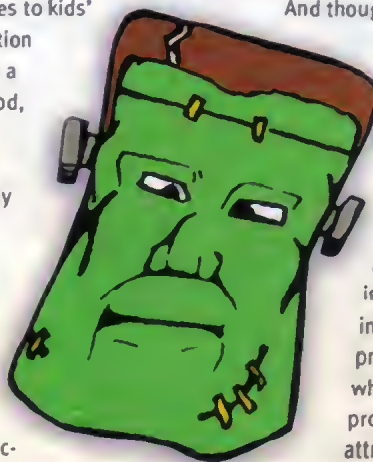
With its collection of 800 pre-designed project layouts, kids can go from project selection to printer in just a few clicks. But since each layout can be easily modified, *Craft Factory* encourages kids to express their creative instincts and abilities. Once kids master

Craft Factory's easy-to-use design tools—which they will do in a surprisingly short time—they can play and experiment to their heart's content, personalizing projects or starting new projects from scratch.

And though much of the joy of using *Craft Factory* is in the process of creation, the high-quality output of *Craft Factory* projects is doubly rewarding. Kids take real pride in their work when their efforts produce tangible, attractive, and functional items they

can share with family, friends, and classmates.

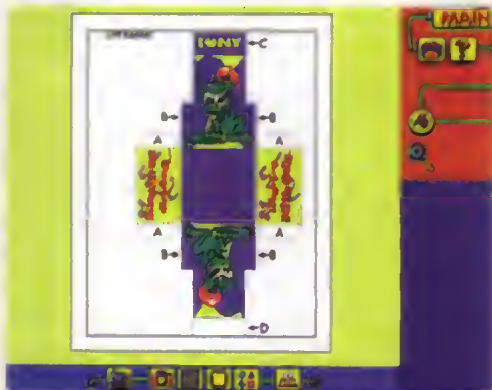
A *Craft Factory* adventure begins when you click on one of the 22 playfully illustrated buttons, each labeled with a project name. (There are 40 different



project types in all.) Even non-readers will find it easy to select a project, as the project names are spoken when the pointing-hand cursor passes over a button. After you select a project, the *Craft Factory* Workspace opens up, and the fun really begins.

Imaginations at work

The *Craft Factory* Workspace is a lively and stimulating environment where color, sound, and motion enhance the creative experience. Beginning with a tool called the Layout Grabber, your child can preview and select from predesigned layouts for each project type. For budding do-it-yourselfers, projects can begin



SIMPLE YET SOPHISTICATED: The *Craft Factory* toolkit gives kids much of the power and versatility of graphics programs for grownups.

with a blank layout, stretching the youngster's imagination to the limits. Either way, your child's imagination is free to roam and explore.

After a layout is selected, it can be printed immediately. But chances are your youngster will want to make changes and enhancements to personalize their project. An extensive set of design and editing tools lets kids add new things to their designs or modify the various components of their projects.

In fact, the simple yet sophisticated *Craft Factory* toolkit is where the program really shines.

Easy enough to use (thanks to the audio feature) to keep younger kids from getting frustrated, yet versatile enough to keep older kids challenged and motivated, these tools possess much of the same functionality found in many "grown-up" graphics programs.

The toolkit includes various "Grabbers" used to insert backgrounds, borders, shapes, text, and graphic images.


Using the Graphics Grabber, you can select from an easily accessible collection of 5,500 images organized by category. To give projects a more individual identity, you can add images from a scanner or digital camera.

Using the other tools found in the Workspace, young artists can change colors, select fonts, apply special effects to text, modify shapes, and copy or remove objects. If you have questions about any of the tools in the *Craft Factory* Workspace, a spoken help system, explaining the function and use of any tool, is just a click away.

The fun doesn't end when you hit "print"

Once a project is ready for printing, the fun isn't over. In fact, printing need not be the final step of a project. Kids can choose to print their project in regular or "coloring book" mode. In regular mode, a project prints as it appears in the Workspace. In "coloring book" mode, only object outlines are printed, allowing aspiring artists to render their creations with markers, paints, or crayons.

Some projects, such as airplanes, mobiles, and gift boxes, require folding, cutting, or gluing once they emerge from the printer. For these creations, simple step-by-step instructions are printed separately. Other projects, like stickers, postcards, and business cards, can be printed on special paper. A sample package of Avery Kids stickers, postcards, and business cards is included with *Craft Factory*.

So turn your kids loose with *Print Artist Craft Factory*. And while they're unleashing their creative abilities, I'll be flying my paper airplanes. 

Five-year-old Melissa Rabin enjoys crafts, computers, and kindergarten. During school hours she allows her dad, Dan, to borrow the family computer.



TAKE IT TO THE LIMIT: Print your project in "coloring book" mode and finish it off with markers, paints, or crayons.

Print Artist Craft Factory



www.sierra.com/pacf

Developer	Knowledge Adventure
Format	WIN95
Rating	Ages 5+
Price	\$29.95
Order #	70160
Phone	1.800.757.7707

COLOR PRINTER ROUNDUP

IF YOU'RE IN THE MARKET FOR A COLOR PRINTER AND find yourself a little confused, look no further. Fortunately, there isn't a whole lot to know about printers, but there are a few common terms and abbreviations with which you might want to be familiar before you go shopping. Let me fill you in on a few basics and toss in a little savvy advice of my own along the way. Then take a look at what I have to say about the six printers given to me for review in this roundup—one of them may be the printer for you!

Canon BJ 7004 Photo



Alps MD-1000



The first term you'll come across when printer shopping is DPI, or Dots Per Inch. This is expressed as height x width, like 360x360 dpi. Basically, the higher the DPI, the higher the quality of the printer's output. Many printer manufacturers will dazzle you with captions like "1800x1800 DPI", but then you get the printer home and find out you can only print this during the vernal equinox on special paper that costs nine bucks a page. In short, read the fine print! If you want or need mega-high resolution, photo-glossy, or ultra-sophisticated output, then definitely buy that. Otherwise, don't pay for capabilities you won't use or don't need.

You should also be familiar with PPM, or Pages Per Minute. Don't trust this rating at face value! If you expect to take your printer home and start pounding out photo-quality, page-size images for invitations to the Smith family reunion, you'll need to start printing two years in advance. Printing an optimized, single photographic-quality image takes several minutes on any color printer, and this varies depending on resolution, size of the image on the page, and color depth of the image.

How I tested

To test each printer, I printed anywhere from five to eight images, mostly full-page 8.5"x11" with a one-inch margin. These images ranged from starships and extraterrestrial weaponry to bright jellybeans and vivid rainbows. I also printed mixed images and text, and a single

page of straight text. I timed each printout and rated its quality on a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 being the lowest score, 4 the highest.

I wanted to really push the printers, so I focused my comparisons on the quality of a few high- and true-color, full-page images, and the amount of time it took to print them. Keep in mind, however, that print times can vary considerably from the figures I offer. I didn't tweak the printer settings for each printout, so I generally printed using default settings, or settings that would keep the printers on roughly equal turf. I wanted to get a feel for the "out of box" experience you get with the printer, and in that same vein I also graded each printer on ease of setup.

Epson Stylus Color 600 and Stylus Color 800

The Epson Stylus Color 600 sports up to 1440x720 DPI, but you can only obtain this level of output on special paper. Otherwise, the maximum, plain-paper resolution is 720x720. Epson is nice enough to include 100 sheets high-quality paper with both the 600 and 800 series printers, along with 15 sheets of photo-quality glossy paper, which I thought was a nice touch.

The Epson Stylus 600 and Stylus 800 both printed identically well on the print image, though the Stylus 800 was much speedier about the process. On some other test images I used (not shown here), however, the Epson 600 had a tendency to print overly light or overly dark (muddy), depending on the image. I printed these same

HP DeskJet 722C



Lexmark 5700



images on the 800, and it handled them much better. If you can afford the extra cash (about \$100), I'd say go for the 800, but if you're on a tighter budget, the 600 may be the better choice.

HP DeskJet 722C

The HP DeskJet produced excellent image quality. While it wasn't the speediest printer, neither was it the slowest. The HP DeskJet 722C might be one

of the better candidates for general-purpose home printers. In many ways, this is the most difficult printer to write about, as it's not as feature rich as the other printers; it isn't as deficient or expensive, either. A solid choice all around for a moderate price.

Lexmark 5700

Based on my tests, I'd have to say the Lexmark 5700 is a steal in its price range. While

some of the output was a little dark, and not quite as sharp as the HP 722C, the Lexmark otherwise produced some of the best and speediest output of all the printers covered here. To sweeten the pot, Lexmark also supports 1200x1200 DPI printing (on special paper), includes a special "Photo Ink" cartridge for improved photo-quality printing, and even ships with Windows NT 4.0.

Color Ink-Jet Printers—Specifications

Printer	PPM	Supported Print Resolutions (DPI)	Noise Level	Average Street Price	Best Point(s)	Worst Point(s)	Comments
Alps MD-1000	1 (b&w)	300x300 600x600 1200x600*	Moderate	\$349**	Always prints dry pages	VERY slow, most expensive in the bunch	Includes metallic colors ink cartridge
Canon BJ-7004 Photo	5 (b&w) 3.5 (color)	1200x600	Quiet	\$329	Excellent output	Slow, takes up a lot of desktop space	Includes 2 photo-quality ink cartridges and a generous helping of specialty paper.
Epson Stylus Color 600	6 (b&w) 4 (color)	180x180 360x360 720x720 1440x720*	Noisy	\$239	Inexpensive, nice software bundle	Mediocre output, noisy	Included a generous amount of specialty paper.
Epson Stylus Color 800	8 (b&w) 7 (color)	180x180 360x360 720x720 1440x720*	Noisy	\$339	Fast & good all-around output	Noisy, a little expensive	Included a generous amount of specialty paper.
HP DeskJet 722C	8 (b&w) 4 (color)	600x600	Quiet	\$289	Very quiet and good output in all modes	Limited print resolutions, slow	Decent all-rounder, not quite as feature-rich as other printers, but not as expensive either.
Lexmark 5700	8 (b&w) 4 (color)	600x600 1200x1200	Moderate	\$249	Excellent output, inexpensive	Can go through ink rapidly	Includes photo-quality ink cartridge.

* Maximum Print Resolution requires special paper

** ALPS currently has a \$50 rebate program (as of this writing) for the Alps MD-1000.

Epson Stylus Color 600



Epson Stylus Color 800



Alps MD-1000

The Alps MD-1000 wins the "most ink cartridges that need to be installed" award. Unlike the other printers in this round-up which use one color ink cartridge and one black ink cartridge, the Alps MD-1000 has four separate ink cartridges, which must be installed for standard printing.

The Alps MD-1000 did a commendable job of printing, and because of the special micro-dry ink used by the printer, documents come out dry with a shiny, almost photographic-quality sheen to them. In contrast, documents produced by most ink-jet printers come out a bit damp. Though overall image reproduction was decent, colors were somewhat dull, stilted, and grainy, lacking the vibrance and color saturation produced by the other printers. Plus, you could casually sip a 64-ounce GigantaGulp and finish it in the amount of time it takes the Alps MD-1000 to print anything. Even in the fastest text-only mode, the Alps MD-1000 took a full minute to print a single page of plain, black text.

Canon BJ-7004 Photo

If there were an award for most difficult printer to get out of the box, Canon would get it. I'm not talking about software setup or installation here, just physically getting the printer out of the box and unpacked. Canon would also win the award for "most tape and packaging material stuck to the printer."

That aside, Canon was reasonably generous with special paper, including 10 sheets of high-gloss photo paper, 20 sheets of glossy photo paper, and two special photo ink cartridges. Though I was beginning

to think the Lexmark might walk away with the best output award, the Canon came out slightly ahead. It also has some of the fastest print times and leaves nice, dry pages. Bear in mind that the Canon is the most expensive printer in this review, and it also takes up the most desktop real estate, being a good two to three inches longer and deeper than the other printers.

And the winner is...

Overall, I was most impressed with the Lexmark 5700, the Canon BJ 7004-photo, and the Epson Stylus 800. Each had great output, and though the Canon's output was a little better than the Epson 800, the 800 was faster. The Epson 600 just couldn't keep up, I'm afraid, and the Alps MD-1000 is extremely slow and offers only average output.

The HP722C and the Epson 800 are very close to each other, with the 722C offering slightly better output at a lower price, but without the speed or the extra features offered by the 800. Therefore, based on overall price, speed, and quality of output, I would have to give this round to the Lexmark 5700 as the current Champion Color Printer. **N**

Bryan Salais prefers to be known as Hardware Ninja.

Color Inkjet Printers—Speed and Quality Comparison

Printer	Setup	16-bit Image Quality	16-bit Printing Speed	24-bit (Photo) Color Quality	24-bit Printing Speed	Text Quality	Text Speed	Speed Rating Points	Overall Score
Alps MD-1000	2.5	2.5	5:14	2.5	6:11	3	1:00	1	2.3
Canon BJ-7004 Photo	3	3.5	3:10	3.5	8:00	3	34 sec	2	3.0
Epson Stylus Color 600	3	2	3:51	2	3:51	2.5	35 sec	2	2.3
Epson Stylus Color 800	3	3	2:02	3	2:07	3	18 sec	4	3.3
HP DeskJet 722C	3	3	4:35	3	4:35	3	24 sec	3	3.0
Lexmark 5700	3	3	2:45	4	2:36	3	28 sec	4	4.3

1=Poor 2=Fair 3=Good 4=Excellent

Color Ink-Jet Printers—Output Comparison



This is the original photo used for this test. It was printed full-page on standard copy paper. Images at right have been enlarged 200%. Note: Due to the variables of the magazine printing process, these images might not match the originals. The captions refer to actual results.



ALPS MD-1000 Black density good, color is flat in middle tones, inconsistent ink coverage.



CANON BJ-7004 PHOTO Good contrast, great highlight detail, good color, shadows lack density.



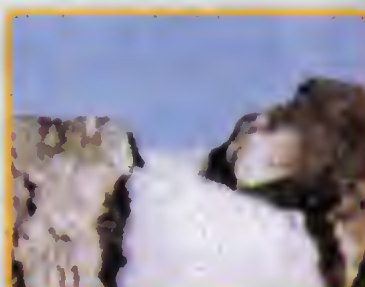
EPSON STYLUS COLOR 600 Color is good, detail is good. Dot structure not as good as Epson Stylus 800.



EPSON STYLUS COLOR 800 Crisp detail, accurate color, good highlight detail, shadow not as dense as Lexmark.



HP DESKJET 722C Good contrast, good highlight and shadow detail, yellowish.



LEXMARK 5700 Great color saturation, slightly warm, excellent details, little highlight details, contrasty.

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Introducing InterAction's i-Spy



In this day and age of cutting-edge technology, few companies will release any details on their upcoming games for fear of another company swiping their ideas. Well, their reluctance didn't hold us back. We've actually managed to infiltrate the high ranks of Sierra and negotiated with (read: bribed) some significant Sierra employ-

ees (read: muckitymucks) to acquire top-secret information about upcoming releases. Because information is knowledge and knowledge is power (and we all love power), we wanted to bring these secret tidbits to your doorstep, hence the new section—The i-Spy. You know... it's amazing what some people will do for an *InterAction* t-shirt.

GRAND PRIX LEGENDS

Baby, You
Can Drive
My Car

www.sierrasports.com

By Chris Hudak

1 967: What a year this is turning out to be—Gerry Dorsey changed his name to, of all things, “Engelbert Humperdinck,” and suddenly he’s famous; they discovered seven new mesons at CERN, and I’m still not 100 percent sure what the hell a “meson” is; the Red Chinese finally managed to get one of their H-bombs to work, God save us all; and here at home, some trusting idiot has put me behind the wheel of a squirrely ‘67 Eagle at the Watkins Glen track. The car is fast, jittery, open-wheeled, and dangerous, a low-slung one-man Matterhorn bobsled with swapped tires and a terrifying gas-tank-to-safety-measures ratio.

Things being what they are, I take it into a wall almost immediately.

It’s not entirely my fault: There isn’t much keeping these old muscle-chariots glued to the track, in terms of friction or aerodynamics, and my driving skills clearly don’t help matters much. This latest Windows 95 racing sim from Sierra Sports (developed by Papyrus) rolls back the dash-clock to that better and bolder age of



WHERE THE RUBBER MEETS THE ROAD: Jump on the brakes too hard and you’ll lock up the tires and slide—or leave the ground and perform cartwheels for the fans

The first time
I saw GPL’s
replay-cam
on a monitor,
I thought I
was watching
actual footage
of some great
race of yore.

racing when you had to be out of your mind to climb into a racecar; the entire enterprise is devoid of our modern, candy-assed precautions. Fins, foils, advanced-polymer helmets, zero-risk observa-

tion areas—bah. These observers lined recklessly just behind the laughable guardrails, they know that if I slew and roll into a crunching, asses-and-elbows tumble toward the sidelines that my

passage is booked, and I'm taking a few of them with me.

The physics engine of doom

Four years the gear-heads at Papyrus spent perfecting this physics engine, and this is how I repay them. Watching the incredible-looking replay function now (the first time I saw *Grand Prix Legends*' replay-cam on a monitor a few feet away, I honestly thought I was watching actual filmed footage of some great race of yore), I can see with utter, deadpan, clinical clarity where things started to go wrong: cheated that turn a little too much, caught my right wheels on the green, and the traction difference did for me—yes, yes, there I go, very funny, clipping the hay bales or whatever they are, *THWACK* pinwheeling off the wall, up on two wheels now, *CRASH* down on the other wheels, *SPROING* airborne again, *THUNK* bottoming out, *JOUNCE* spiraling up for more air, *WHUNCH* nose-on into the ground and tottering in perfect balance there for a terrible moment, an abused mechanical ballerina, and *FLUDGE* finally slamming to a terminal halt at the end of a swath of ruined grass.

Thank God I didn't have the Realistic Damage mode selected—*GPL*'s astounding physics engine made watching this kinetic fiasco painful enough, without the added detail of seeing my beloved roadster lurch into a torquing spray of metal across the pleasant green of Watkins Glen: These open-toed babies really aren't built very well.

But, as I say, I didn't have Realistic Damage mode set, and I'm instantly ready for some once-more-into-the-breach action (turns out there's an Instant Recovery function, and good thing, too). Arcade mode or no, the transmission is still making a

creepy, protesting noise as I try to gun the vehicle off the aforementioned ruined grassy incline. And only now, as I goose the car out of the embarrassing predicament in fits and starts, I can hear the roar of an excited, applauding crowd. (Wait a minute—is this irony? Keep cheering, you peanut-gobblers, I may come back for you in a lap or two.)

Convincing sense of speed

I finally make it back to the blacktop, the engine winding up into a shriek of vengeance as I punch her up through the gears, and now I'm blowing through an easy curve, approaching the straightaway. Second only to *GPL*'s stunning realistic look is its massive, convincing sense of speed. The Look Left and Look Right functions may be handy for a split-second when some other racer is muscling you, but using either too long gives me the booboo-jeebies; that passing blur of track and greenery, much more so than the tachometer, tells me just how fast I'm going, and it's easy to fixate on it, become mesmerized: I'm going into the straightaway; I'm going at what might be 100mph, or Mach 5, I can't tell; I'm going to win this race, I'm going—

—I'm going into another wall.

I panic and crank into a long, slewing skid, laying rubber and pluming smoke. Two full 360s, a perhaps illegal sideslip across more green, and—bingo!—I manage to wrestle my way out of the spin just as I re-emerge onto the track, momentum and orientation carrying me perfectly forward and back into the race as though I'd planned it all. Not what I intended, but hey, it cut a few seconds off the turn, and nobody even died.

Stunning, realistic, and satisfyingly rough in the right places,



YES, I'M GONNA BE A STAR: Hitting the finish line first means mastering all the right moves, including how to pull ahead of the pack and how to stay on the track when everyone around you is flying off it.

Grand Prix Legends offers the actual tracks and racers of the glorious 1967 season, and I'm looking forward to showing them all what a '90s boy can do, given a little practice. "Yes, I'm gonna be a star...."

Let's just keep that Realistic Damage mode off a little while longer, shall we? **1**

In a past life, Chris Hudak blew everyone off the track in his '67 Eagle.

STARSIEGE

This Universe Is Too Big for One Planet

www.starsiege.com

By Mark H. Walker

Once you fight your way through all the scenarios wrapped inside Starsiege, you can turn to the scenario editor and create your own.

The siege is over. The Cybrids have infested, ravaged, and conquered our beloved Earth.

Distracted by a rebellion in the mines of Mars, the vaunted Terran Defense Force, or TDF, has been all but destroyed. *EarthSiege* is dead; enter the next epic battle. Enter *Starsiege*.

Originally titled *EarthSiege 3*, *Starsiege* is the all-new chapter in the saga of the Cybrid wars.

"We wanted a name that would broaden the scope of the universe," explained Jeff Tunnell, executive director for *Starsiege*. "There's a lot more to *Starsiege* than battling for control of Earth."

Under the guidance of creative director Chris Cole, Dynamix has crafted a rich story that weaves together not only *Starsiege*, but several other soon-to-be-announced *Starsiege* titles.

It goes like this: The Emperor Petresun, ruler of the confederated meta-nations of Earth, knows we have not seen the last of the Cybrids and begins to resurrect Earth's long-dormant defenses.

Unfortunately, Earth's

colonies—consisting of Mars, Venus, The Belt, Europa, Io, and Titan—resent the Emperor's defense-budget taxation. The colonies rebel, and much of the TDF is sent to quell the rebellion. It is at this moment, when the TDF is



IN THE YEAR 2829: The Cybrids are back, and this time they want it all.



NOT JUST RUNNING AND GUNNING: Astute HERC pilots crouch, dodge, swerve, stalk, and refocus shields to take advantage of the terrain and their enemy's weaknesses.

stretched Twiggy-thin, that the Cybrids descend on Earth. The planet is besieged. It's only a matter of time before all humankind is eradicated. *Starsiege* begins as the Cybrids swoop down on Mars to destroy the few remaining human forces.

It's a good-looking war

Starsiege focuses on combat between HERCs (10-meter-tall weapon chassis), tanks, and flyers. Although it follows in the footsteps of its *EarthSiege* predecessors, *Starsiege* is built on a new 3D game engine that paints the most detailed terrain, buildings, HERCs, and weapons of war

yet seen in this type of simulation. The HERCs look nearly "cut-scene" real, while the rolling hills, snowfall, and sun glare add greatly to the ambiance.

"We have an incredible engine," technical director Rick Overman declared, "and we are going to use it to develop superb games."

However, the Dynamix design team understands that a pretty HERC alone does not a game make, and thus have crammed *Starsiege* full of the things that do. There are a ton of vehicles to pilot, including nine basic HERC chassis, tanks, and VTOL (Vertical Take Off and Landing) flyers. Each



ONE-TWO PUNCH: Mow down colonial rebels and rampaging Cybrids with an arsenal of more than 40 weapons.

type of unit—be it HERC, tank, or flyer—can be customized with different weapons, reactors, drive trains, shields, and so on.

The options, however, are not limited to the HERC construction bay. There are a myriad of tactical alternatives once the battle is joined. These HERCs are much more than plodding weapon platforms. Astute pilots avoid incoming blaster bolts by crouching behind buildings, deflect shots by refocusing their shields toward troublesome enemies, and sneak up on their opponents by “cloaking” their HERCs in a chameleon-like field. In short, there is much more to *Storsiege* than running and gunning.

Play our scenarios or create your own

Better still, there is much more to *Storsiege* than *mono-a-mano* HERC duels. The game ships with two campaigns: a human and (for those with a slightly darker side) a Cybrid. Both campaigns will play out in numerous locales: from icy worlds silenced by falling snow to the endless dunes of searing desert moons. And, as befits a game of this magnitude, each campaign will include at least 22

missions grouped into smaller, five (or so) mini-campaigns.

Perhaps you’ll tire of fighting the scenarios wrapped inside of *Storsiege*. Fear not, the game has THE most advanced scenario editor we’ve seen in any combat simulation. Gamers can choose a planet, erect buildings, customize them, place gun turrets, and deploy AI opponents. The AI opponent programming options are nearly limitless. For example,

opposing units can be set to run when they spot you, stand and fight, attack aggressively, or snipe. And all this placing, deploying, and AI-setting

can be done with a mere click and flick of your mouse hand.

“The whole engine is so flexible,” Overman said. “The scenario construction options are nearly limitless.”

And so is your choice of opponents. Online gamers have been happily shredding each other’s HERCs since *Storsiege*’s Alpha Tech release in February. The game offers a full plate of multi-player options, and they are, in a word, a blast. You can download the Alpha Tech release at www.storsiege.com.

The siege is over, but the

battle has just begun. The battle is for the survival of humanity. Nevertheless, with *Storsiege*’s gorgeous 3D graphics, innovative tactical options, in-depth campaigns, scenario editor, and multi-player gaming, the gamers will be the winners no matter who is the victor on the battlefield. **P**

Mork H. Walker is a longtime EarthSiege fan and military science-fiction author.



MORE THAN ONE WAY TO FIGHT A WAR: Customize dozens of HERCs, tanks, and flyers until you find the ideal fighting force.

STARSIEGE TRIBES

**Be True
to Your
Tribe**

www.starsiege.com

By Rob Bakie

In the far-flung future, 800 years after the first *Starsiege* war, much of humanity has splintered into nomadic groups intent on exploring, mapping, and conquering the galaxy. For those nomads, far from Imperial influence or control, war is a daily fact of life—though they wage it with small arms and vehicles instead of the giant robots of home. It's gritty,

it's violent, it's personal. Welcome to the world of *Starsiege TRIBES*.

TRIBES is a 3D first-person action shooter that combines the elements of a squad-based strategy game with the adrenaline-pumping action of a death match. As with other

...you'll have to learn to accessorize with gravity boots, grappling hooks, and jet packs.



NO TIME OFF: Whether you're on attack or defense, the combat keeps on comin' even as you cross the indoor/outdoor threshold.

first-person shooters there is, of course, the rush of sneaking up on someone and blowing them into tiny tiny bits. But, unlike other games, in *TRIBES* you have goals, objectives, and a squad that you won't—you can't—let down.

This is not your father's action shooter

Historically, multi-player co-operative play has been an add-on to games, an afterthought or a patch six months after release—not so with *TRIBES*. *TRIBES* was built from the ground up with squad play in mind—in fact, the purpose of the single-player mode is to train you for the main event. And what a main event it is.

Instead of operating on the lone gunman theory, you are grouped into squads, or high-tech tribes. You elect a commanding officer who masterminds the operation from a special “bird’s-eye” screen of the battlefield. You break into squads that have different objectives: from reconnaissance to butt-kicking. All the info you could want is available on your Heads-Up Display, but all

you really need to know is how to keep yourself and your teammates alive.

Eenie, meenie...

It isn't all fun and games though. The three types of specialized armor are good, but you'll have to learn to accessorize with gravity boots, grappling hooks, and jet packs. The multiple base configurations are fine, but who can decide between the Auto Turret Sentry and the Stationary Manned Rocket Launcher? And finally, the infinite variety of mission choices is great, but eventually you will have to pick a favorite.

Imagine all the things you love about online multiplayer action, captured, distilled, and refined in one single game. Imagine the wave of the future: online multiplayer squad action. Imagine it being ridiculously easy to start, learn, and play. OK then: Imagine *Starsiege TRIBES*. **n**

Rob Bakie is Webmaster for the World Opponent Network. In his spare time he is inventing cold fusion and an inflatable spacecraft.



NO SAFE HAVENS: The action moves without break from barren deserts to echoing command centers to snow-blanketed hills and back again.

QUEST FOR GLORY V

Hero Still in Training

www.qg5.com

By Geoffrey Keighley

So, you still want to be a hero? As the archetype decrees, you're never a true hero unless you've come up against minor and major tests of your strength. For fans of the *Quest for Glory* series, perhaps the greatest trial of your patience comes with the announcement that Sierra won't be cutting the red ribbon on the fifth and final *Quest for Glory* game, *Dragon Fire*, until this fall. Because new features are being added to upgrade the technical prowess of an already stunning 3D graphics engine, this epic role-playing

...players will now be able to cast multi-colored spells and see the environment refract and deflect the spell's light.

game from designer Lori Cole is taking longer than expected to complete.

Sierra's ace group of developers in Oakhurst, California, will be working around the clock and all through the summer to put the finishing touches on *Marete* and the outlying islands, with their lush panoramic graphics.

The developers recently announced they have decided to buff up the graphic horsepower of the game from 8-bit to 16-bit color, in order to display more



LIGHT UP YOUR WORLD: *Quest for Glory* fans will find new places to visit, new spells to cast, and new quests to conquer in *Dragon Fire*.

realistic true-color images and special effects. For instance, players will now be able to cast multi-colored spells such as the juggling lights, lightning bolts, and flame darts and see the environment refract and deflect the spell's light. When you light a torch, it will actually cast light onto objects in the world.

Hey Mom, can we keep him?

Did I mention the 125-foot-wide by 75-foot-tall dragon? The sheer size of this creature in the game resulted in the developers needing to write additional code to create a hybrid voxel and polygon graphics engine just to animate this fire-breathing foe in all his glory. Sure, they might have considered giving him a pink slip, but there was one little problem: The game's called *Dragon Fire*, so it would have probably upset a few players if there were no dragon. Plus, I think there was some

kind of union issue with the dragon and his contract—he had to be a certain number of polygons or he walked. A dwarf dragon just didn't seem quite in keeping with the epic scope of the game.

But all kidding aside, Lori Cole has created one of the most ambitious role-playing games to date, which has an intriguing multiplayer component, allowing up to three simultaneous players. With new locations to visit such as the tarnished ruins of Atlantis, accessible only by swimming, and majestic tests of your strength, including the challenging Seven Rites of Rulership, this fall will mark the start of your toughest *Quest for Glory* yet. **Q**

Longtime InterAction contributor Geoff Keighley is the editorial voice of GameSlice (www.gameslice.com).



HALL OF KINGS: Experience the Seven Rites of Rulership when *Dragon Fire* debuts this fall.



3-D ULTRA MINIGOLF DELUXE

**As Unpredictable
as a Runaway
Shopping Cart**

www.sierra.com

by Jeff Gilbert

Sure, golfing sensation Tiger Woods may think he's a big shot master of his profession, but until he's successfully chipped a shot across a bubbling pool of acid in a mad scientist's laboratory, sliced one through the snack bar of a drive-in movie theater, or played through a maze of dynamite, trampolines, and cannons, then he don't know Jack. (Oops—wrong game!)

With the 18 original holes of 3-D Ultra MiniGolf plus nine new ones, *MiniGolf Deluxe* boldly goes where no endorsed golf ball has gone before: bouncing through castles loaded with spiteful banshees, leap-frogging cloud-to-cloud while biplanes buzz the airborne course, dodging barn-sucking twisters, and plunging into the shark-infested deep while teeing off from the deck of a pirate ship. Expanding on the irresistible putt-putting fun of 3-D *MiniGolf*, Dynamix hit upon a winning formula for its marvelously inventive sequel: other than implied laws of gravity, there are

no rules. Ghosts may be see-through, but they won't let you play-through. A green light means go, but a red light will leave your balls pinned to the grill of a semi. (One painful guess as to what the steamroller does to 'em.)

The razzle-dazzle graphics (with loads more 3D animations in the *Deluxe* nine) enhance gameplay to the point where getting the ball to the hole is only half the fun. There are lots of secret areas and cleverly twisted game-within-a-game turnabouts. For example, hit a ball at the drive-in screen showing a '50s monster movie. As the onscreen scenes change so does the destination of your ball, which is magically transported into the movie itself. And did anyone mention the flick's creature has no love lost for balls that end up in his stinky lagoon?

3-D Ultra *MiniGolf Deluxe* comes loaded with new bells and whistles, the best being its built-



NINE HOLES AND A MOVIE: Hit a ball at the screen and it'll disappear into a 1950s monster movie!

in multiplayer feature, which can be launched directly from World Opponent Network, or WON (www.won.net) and played over the Internet. Also added is three new clubs: light, medium, and heavy—for those long underwater shots, of course.

Those fancy-pants golf-pro guys can keep their shiny clubs and fame. 3-D Ultra *MiniGolf Deluxe* is as unpredictable as a runaway shopping cart and more fun than rubber underwear. The big question is, when will the PGA acknowledge that? *👉*

Jeff Gilbert is the sociolly disturbed mind behind ManSplat Magazine, as well as an avid indoor golfer.



TWISTER: You never know what you'll have to dodge

GOLF PRO '99

Golf Isn't a Game, It's a Way of Life

www.sierra.com

By David Senan

I can clearly remember the first time I played the evil game of golf. I was nine or ten, and I duffed a five iron somewhere along that fine line between the deep rough and National Forest Service land. I turned to my dad and with calm, cool ferocity shrieked, "I hate this &\$%#! game!" The divot my dad took out of my "back nine" left a little scar, but I lived to play more golf...and more golf...and more golf. Over the years I've come to understand something about golf: it's more than simply a sport; for millions of people in just about every corner of the world, golf is a way of life.

We want competition, and not just computer-generated hermaphrodites who shoot par every round.



EVERYTHING BUT TIGER: Play on fairways so true to life, you'll even get the members' bounces.



MONEY SHOT: Find all the competition you can handle on WON net.

You know what I like

Two years ago, it felt as though we had seen everything there was ever going to be to see in computer golf games. Then, in 1996 Vance Cook knocked all us hard-drive hackers in the knickers with TrueSwing in *Front Page Sports Golf 1.0*. Finally the lame-o days of click click click were over, and the golfer swung the club—in real-time—as you moved the mouse! Some, including gaming pubs like *PC Gomer*, said, "Bravo!" Those of us who live for PC golf said emphatically, wiping our chins and patting our swollen bellies, "What took you so long?" TrueSwing was so revolutionary, it seemed obvious.

After talking to the guys working on the sequel, *Sierra Sports Golf Pro '99*, I could tell these people know what computer golfers want. We want competition, and not just computer-generated hermaphrodites who shoot par every round; we want real tournaments against real human opponents over the Internet. We want a powerful course editor (and none of those weenie editors that only allow you to build individual holes), so we can build fan-

tasy courses. In fact, while you're at it, why don't you throw in a website where we can trade personally created courses and get updates and stats on the people competing online on the SGA (Sierra Golf Association) Tour?

Think you're the best?

Speaking of the SGA, we want real prizes from weekly tournaments consistently hosted by a well-known gaming site (World Opponent Network, www.won.net), so we can be sure that the best competition'll be there week in, week out, just like the PGA Tour. We got 3D-rendered golfers in the first game, but want 3D accelerator support so it's like watching real people play the game in real-time. We want community. Golf may be a game you play ultimately against yourself, but thanks to Vance Cook it doesn't have to be a lonely experience. Golf really is a way of life, and later this summer, everyone'll see for themselves, *Sierra Sports Golf Pro '99* will be, too. **W**

David Senan is the former editor of InterAction and is currently golfing in Nepal.

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#83461-Win 95



Red Baron II
#83680-Win 95



Ski Racing
#70075-Win 95



Betrayal in Antara
#83674-Win



Trophy Bass 2
Deluxe
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#

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Zip

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☐ Check enclosed ☐ VISA ☐ MasterCard ☐ Discover ☐ American Express
(payable to Sierra)

Account Number

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GIP802



Lords Royal Collection
#70315-Win 95



Civil War Generals 2
#70225-Win



Lords of Magic
#70195-Win 95



Leisure Suit Larry
Collection Series
#73190-Win



Hoyle Classic
Board Games
#70240-Win



Trophy Rivers
#70060-Win 95



Power Chess 98
#70280-Win 95



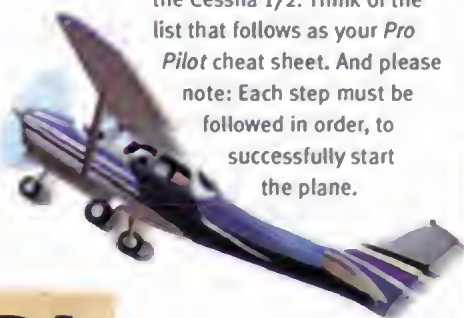
The Police Quest Collection
#72560-Dos/Win

Sierra's resident answer man responds to your most frequently asked questions about your favorite games with straight-up hints and configuration suggestions. If there's anything about any of Sierra's games that's giving you fits, write us at: interaction@sierra.com.

PRO PILOT GETTING STARTED



Pro Pilot doesn't start you off in the air—you start on the ground, as you would in real-life pilot training. Because the act of starting the plane can be a daunting task for beginners, and because the wealth of information *Pro Pilot* offers can be just as daunting, I thought it would be good to offer some concise, step-by-step instructions for firing up the Cessna 172. Think of the list that follows as your *Pro Pilot* cheat sheet. And please note: Each step must be followed in order, to successfully start the plane.



SIERRA CUSTOMER SERVICE

For general product information or questions about an order, call our Direct Sales line toll-free at (800) 757-7707 (Monday-Saturday, 7am to 11pm CST, or Sunday, 8am to 9pm CST).

To check the status of refunds or disk and documentation replacement (warranty processing), call our Corporate Customer Service Office, at (425) 746-5771 (Monday-Friday, 8am to 4pm PST).

Email questions to: customer.service@sierra.com



1. Look at the RPM Gauge. Write down the numbers displayed at the bottom of it. This is the Hobbs Meter, which shows the number of hours the engine has been running. You'll need this information so you can record it in your flight logbook.
2. You need a rich mixture for take off, so push the red Mix knob all the way in. This knob is located along the bottom of the screen.
3. Now you need to set the carburetor heat to cold by pushing the Carb Heat knob (two knobs left of the Mix knob) all the way in.
4. Set your battery/alternator switch to on. This is the red

- switch in the lower left corner of the screen, just a little to the right of the Fuel switch and the Fuel Selector switch.
5. Select both fuel tanks by setting the Fuel Selector to B. The Fuel Selector is the red switch in the lower left corner of the screen. The red switch must be covering up the "B." If it isn't, your plane will start but the engine will die after a brief period (thankfully, before you're in the air...).
6. Open the throttle a little. In a real plane, you would push the knob in about 1/8 of an inch. You'll have to approximate that here.

7. Make sure the brakes are on. You can toggle them on/off by pressing the M or B key on your computer keyboard.
8. Press the S key on the keyboard to start the ignition. (Alternatively, you can click on the S next to the ignition switch.)
9. Check your oil pressure. It should be in the green.
10. Turn on your Beacon and Navigation Lights (the small row of white switches along the bottom of the screen marked BCN and NAV).
11. Turn on the Avionics power button.

COMBAT TIPS HELLFIRE



NEW CHARACTER, NEW WEAPONS: Hellfire introduces the Monk, a high-speed, staff-bearing terror.

What are the Hellfire unique items?

The items in *Hellfire* use the same graphics as the original items in the game (albeit with different powers). You can recognize the items by their name—for example, all weapons of “Doppleganger” are new items. This leads us to the next question we’ve been hearing:

Monsters are multiplying before my eyes! Why?

You have a weapon of the Doppleganger. Striking monsters with it creates a clone of whatever monster you strike. Why is this a good thing? More experience! Just be sure you’re strong enough to take on your enemies and their clones.

How to kick butt and take names

This leads me to another recommendation—if you haven’t tried him already, the Monk is an excellent character for using

Doppleganger items. Because of his speed, he is best suited to dealing with large groups of monsters. Just make sure you’ve got him healed up, loaded with healing potions and/or scrolls, then go into a dungeon with a Doppleganger weapon. From there you should be able to kick the crap out of all the monsters and their newly cloned buddies. Oh, and be sure you have a Town Portal scroll handy in case things get ugly. I wouldn’t generally recommend this tactic against monsters with ranged attacks, though...

...the Monk is an excellent character for using Doppleganger items. Because of his speed, he is best suited to dealing with large groups of monsters.



SIERRA HINT LINE

Phone Numbers

(900) 370-5583 (US)
(900) 451-3356 (Canada)

We have a 24-hour-a-day automated system that walks you through the hints menu. You must have a touchtone phone and be 18 years or older.

Call the Hint Line when you are unable to finish a game, cannot pass a level, or cannot complete a task.

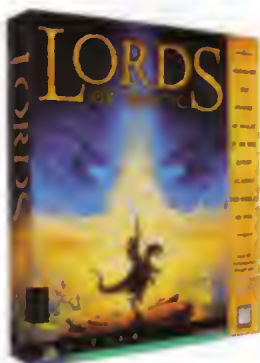
Cost

\$.95/minute in the US,
\$1.25/minute in Canada.

Games Supported

Adventure of Willy Beamish
Betrayal at Krondor
Betrayal in Antara
Birthright
Caesar II
Castle of Dr. Brain
Code Name: Iceman
The Colonel's Bequest
Conquest of Camelot
Conquest of the Longbow
Cyberstorm 2
Dagger of Amon Ra
EcoQuest I
Freddie Pharkas Frontier Pharmacist
Gabriel Knight
Gabriel Knight 2
Goblins I, II, III
Gold Rush
Half-Life
Inca
Incredible Machine
King's Quest I through VII
Leisure Suit Larry I, II, III, V, VI, VII
Lighthouse
Lords of Magic
Lords of the Realm I, II
Lost in Time
Manhunter: New York
Manhunter: San Francisco
Outpost
Phantasmagoria I, 2
Pepper's Adventure in Time
Police Quest I, II, III, IV
Police Quest: SWAT, SWAT 2
Quest for Glory I, II, III, IV
Rama
Rise of the Dragon
Secret of the Lost Rain Forest
Space Quest I, II, III, IV, V, VI
Shivers I, II
Urban Runner
Woodruff and the Schnibble

LORDS OF MAGIC BASIC TIPS



ROUND 'EM UP: When parleying doesn't work, surround your enemy and let the arrows fly.

Combat Tip 1: Attack en masse!

Using a long line of troops that can encircle a single opponent is effective because when a unit is struck it is momentarily paralyzed. If the enemy is struck many times by units that have moved to encircle it, your opponents will be virtually unable to defend themselves. This makes long line formations far more effective than circular or square type formations, which can leave too many of your troops at the rear where they can't get at the enemy.

Combat Tip 2: Target all your missile fire at one enemy:

This is a simple tactic. One dead enemy is better than 2 wounded ones, so focus all your missile and ranged attacks against the same target until it is destroyed. This also operates on the same strategy as Combat Tip 1 in that repeated hits from missile attacks will momentarily paralyze the enemy... and if you're lucky, terminate them before they can retaliate.

Combat Tip 3: Use mercenaries

When faced with a superior army, attacking with a group of newly hired mercenary troops is a great way to weaken them prior to striking with your main army. With a little strategy and luck, you can weaken the army to a point where your next army can finish them off.

I successfully captured a Champion (or Lord) in combat, but could not take them as prisoner.



That's because subdued Lords and Champions are automatically put to the sword, whether you like it or not.

Sometimes during the computer's turn I enter combat with a thief that I have suddenly detected. What is going on?

This occurs when you try to sneak up on another player to interact with them in stealth mode, and are detected prior to reaching that player. The same thing is true for the computer. He just tried to steal or spy on you! (This usually means it's time to open a can of Whoopass on someone...)

Sometimes it's just better to be nice.

If you have enemies that don't completely hate your guts, bribe them (i.e. offer them gifts). After all, the more you can get on their good side, the less you'll have to worry about them causing you trouble later on. As a general rule, anything that ranks as 'Aversion' or better might be worth improving, and this is especially true if their attitude is 'Neutral' or better.

SIERRA TECH SUPPORT

Contact Tech Support when you have problems using a Sierra product. Please do not call for hints or tips needed to finish a game. There is no charge (other than your long distance charges) for Tech Support.

By Phone: (425) 644-4343

24-hour automated phone support is available seven days a week. Tech Support representatives are available Monday-Friday, 10am to 6:45pm PST.

By Fax: (425) 644-7967

By Email: support@sierra.com

For Hint Line information, see page 93.

BETA TESTERS NEEDED!!!

Dear Sierra Customer:

Many of you have noticed my absence these last few months. After nearly twenty years of making games, I decided that it was time for retirement. Building Sierra for twenty years was a lot of hard work and I was ready to relax and travel. But I quickly discovered that I'm much too energetic to stay retired for long! I now have a new company going, and would like you to consider helping me beta test my first product.

My idea for a new company may seem a little strange to you. Way back when Roberta and I founded Sierra On-Line, we had a clear vision of the future – that someday playing games on personal computers would be as common as going to the movies. Many people thought we were crazy. When Sierra started, there were only about eight computer stores within the entire United States. Today our vision doesn't seem crazy at all. Annual sales of electronic games are actually larger than gross receipts at movie theaters. Amazing.



The next ten years is going to see radical change – even more change than the last ten years has brought. Radio, television and telephone will unite on the Internet. My new company, WorldStream Communications, is creating the new types of interactivity this “convergence” will require. WorldStream is not about computer games, it is about entertainment and global communication – the kind of communication that will be common in the next century.

WorldStream's first product, www.TalkSpot.com, is based on a talk show format and is in the early stages of beta testing. Soon, we will broadcast several different channels of programming, worldwide, 24 hours per day, seven days per week. Most broadcasts will be LIVE, and you, our audience, will be as integral a part of the show as our live hosts. We will cover a huge variety of topics: politics, sports, astrology, science, dating, music, movies, cars and, of course, computer games (some of your favorite game designers are scheduled soon!).

Here is my personal invitation to experience the future, right now, as a member of WorldStream's beta test team. This invitation is open to all my old friends at Sierra. It's absolutely FREE. Visit www.talkspot.com.

Sincerely,

Ken Williams
Co-Founder, Sierra On-Line
Co-Founder, WorldStream Communications

<http://www.worldstream.com>

<http://www.talkspot.com>

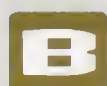
WorldStream

TALK
SPOT

A Bill of Rights for Computer Buyers

Warp back in time in to alternate universe, and witness an effort to word-process a Bill of Rights for another United States. Any resemblance to our own reality is entirely coincidental—except for the horror stories of computer users.

"Consumer rights are like political rights—best preserved through constant use."



ENJAMIN FRANKLIN was to do the desk-top publishing for the Constitutional Convention, but his new laser printer wouldn't talk to his new computer because of an obscure software glitch. The computer store told him it would take weeks and weeks for a technician to sail in from England. Franklin bemoaned his plight. He expected that the other Founding Fathers would scold him for not being able to print the drafts they were working up. But just the opposite happened. George Washington, Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and the others—they all offered nothing but empathy. "We should actually be drafting two Bills of Rights," Washington said. "One as a series of general amendments to the Constitution. And a second to protect computer users." The bewigged heads of the other patriots nodded.

The date was July 4, 1776, plus or minus a decade or two. You see, in this alternate universe, thanks to computer glitches, some files got scrambled, and people would later confuse the

Bill of Rights and the Declaration of Independence. But that's just a detail. Via Computer Right #2 below, the Constitutional Convention deftly responded to Franklin's complaint—even if the whole document had to be handwritten instead of word-processed.

Here are the first few amendments of the Computer Users' Bill of Rights.

Right #1: The Ability of Computer Users to Buy What They Expect at the Prices They Expect

No store or website shall abridge the right of computer buyers to receive price quotes that don't self-destruct. Equipment specs shall be as advertised. Rain checks shall not be necessary because the right merchandise shall always be on hand.

Right #2: Easy Compatibility

Stores shall not infringe on the right of users to compatible equipment. Computers must talk happily to printers, modems,

joysticks, and all other creations of Silicon Valley and beyond. "Plug and play" shall be more than an advertising slogan. Users shall no longer have to wrestle with horrors like IRQs and memory addresses.


Right #3: Reliability

No user shall, in time of peace or war, find technical problems quartered within his or her machine. Users shall not suffer inept engineering or bad workmanship.

Right #4: Good, Speedy Technical Support at No Extra Charge

The right to feel secure and knowledgeable in one's computer use shall not be violated. Users shall not suffer manuals written in Sanskrit. On the rare occasions when support is necessary, the technicians offering it shall all hold doctorates in computer science from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. These experts shall answer support calls on the first ring.

No users shall have to endure prehistoric rock music while on hold, because "On Hold" won't exist. That is a term for other universes.

No support fees shall be imposed on computer users. In fact, if users must call, the manufacturers shall pay stiff penalties to the customers for taking up their time. 

Yes, readers, this document is imaginary, but the real laws of the United States do offer some help. Through local phone books, The Consumer Resources Handbook (www.pueblo.gsa.gov/1997res.htm), and the Federal Trade Commission (www.ftc.gov and www.ftc.gov/ftc/offices.htm), you can track down consumer-protection agencies in your area. What's more, you can try private organizations like the Better Business Bureau (www.bbb.org).

Are current protections adequate for consumers? Of course not. But you owe it to yourself and others to exercise them as effectively as you can. Consumer rights are like political rights—best preserved through constant use.

DAVID H. ROTHMAN (rothman@clark.net) is the author of *NetWorld!* (www.primapublishing.com/life/76150013.html) and other books and runs the TeleRead Project (www.teleread.org).

turn, run, turn, turn
run, turn, run, turn
turn, turn, run, run
run, turn, run, turn
turn, run, run, run
run, run, turn, run
turn, turn, run, run
run, run, slam door
breathe, breathe

feeling safe?

Think again. You can run. You can
they'd like to get a taste. Change course
up to flush you out. Slam a door, they'll
So ask yourself: Is your will to live strong

H A L F



MATURE



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hide. But these guys can smell you. And
e, they'll follow. Take cover, they'll team
get it open. They're hunting you down.
nger than theirs?

HALF LIFE

SHOOT TO KILL. THINK TO LIVE.



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Includes a heavy-duty floor console with gas and brake pedals.

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